© Copyright by

James Bryan Cobban, Sr.

1993

GEORGE WILLIS BENNETT:
DENOMINATIONAL CHANGE AGENT

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Faculty of
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

---

by
James Bryan Cobban, Sr.
December, 1993

Approval Sheet

GEORGE WILLIS BENNETT: DENOMINATIONAL CHANGE AGENT

James Bryan Cobban, Sr.

Read and Approved by:

Larry McSwain (Chairperson)

John L. Dever

Raymond Bailey

Date July 9, 1993

In Memory of Ernie White,

My teacher, mentor, and friend

Who taught me how to fight the good fight

And to Bryan,

The light of my life

Who gives me the strength to fight

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS viii

LIST OF TABLES x

LIST OF FIGURES xi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS xii

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY 1

Background of the Study 5

Methodology 8

2. A FUNCTIONAL FOUNDATION FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL CHANGE 13

Smelser's Contribution to the Study 25

The Nature of Social Structure 28

Smelser's Theory of Social Change 33

A General Theory of Action 36

Sub-System Relationships 39

The Sequence of Change 40

The Role of the Change Agent 44

Filling Boxes of Denominational Change . . . 46

Resistance to Structural-Functional Analysis 54

3. "THY WILL BE DONE": A LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAPTISTS 58

Bennett's Early Life at Home 58

Educational Influences 61

Marriage to Miss Dillard 62

The Call to Ministry and Bennett's Preparation 64

Olive Chapel Baptist Church, Apex, North Carolina, 1950-55 69

First Baptist Church, Red Springs, North Carolina, 1955-59 77

Bennett's Move to the Seminary 79

The Influence of Social Work 81

Operation Partnership, Inc. 82

The Association of Christian Training and Service 84

Baptists Finally Confront a Crisis 86

The Urban Training Cooperative 92

Associational Strategy Planning 99

The Mega-Focus Cities Program 102

Project: Assistance for Churches in Transitional Communities 103

Transitional Communities Ministerial Caucus 106

The Center for Urban Church Studies 106

Denominational Consultations 114

Bennett's Ministry Through Writing 117

Articles in Denominational Publications 117

The Allen Temple Project 135

Resistance to Bennett's Work 140

4. A LIFE OF SERVICE TO THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY 147

Professor of Ethics and Church and Community 158

The Evolution of the Social Work Program 159

Bennett's Faculty Address 163

The Founding of the Church and Community Department 167

Bennett as a Teacher 174

Bennett as a Social Iconoclast 181

Bennett as a Seminary Administrator 185

Director of Field Education (1969-75) 185

Director of Professional Studies (1975-80) 195

Director of Graduate Studies (1980-83) 199

Dean of the School of Theology (1983-88) 200

Seminary Provost (1987-91) 204

Retirement: 1991 and Beyond 206

Bennett's Legacy to the Seminary 207

5. A SYSTEMS INTERPRETATION: BENNETT AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE 211

The Systems in the Life of Bennett 211

Bennett and the Change Process 219

Stage One: Disruption in Goal Achievement 221

Stage Two: Eruption in Goal Achievement . 223

Stage Three: Values that Direct the Energy 225

Stage Four: The First Movement Toward Adaptation 226

Stage Five: Integration of the Innovations 229

Stage Six: Pattern Maintenance 230

Stage Seven: Total Pattern Management . . 232

Stage Eight: The Birth of a New Iconoclast 242

Systemic Values: Bennett's Contributions to the Boundaries 243

The Origin of Bennett's Values 246

Implications for Future Change Agents: A Student's Reflection 251

Bennett as Barrier Breaker: A Theological Postscript 258

BIBLIOGRAPHY 265

TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

A	Adaptive Function
ACTS	Association of Christian Training and Service
ASP	Associational Strategy Planning
CLC	Christian Life Commission
CUCS	Center for Urban Church Studies
FMB	Foreign Mission Board
G	Goal Attainment Function
HMB	Home Mission Board
I	Integrative Function
L	Latent Pattern Maintenance Function
MDiv	Master of Divinity
MFC	Mega-Focus Cities
MSSW	Master of Science in Social Work
MSW	Master of Social Work
NIV	New International Version
PACT	Project: Assistance to Churches in Transitional Communities
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
S	System
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SBTS	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
SSB	Sunday School Board
STD	Doctor of Sacred Theology
TCMC	Transitional Communities Ministerial Caucus

ThD	Doctor of Theology
ThM	Master of Theology
UTC	Urban Training Cooperative

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

5.1 A Comparison of Smelser's Stages of Change and the Change Process in the Southern Baptist Convention 241

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
2.1	The Inter-Relationship Between the Functional Exigencies in a System	20
2.2	The Functional Dimensions of a Social System	26
5.1	The Stages of Social Change and Their Correlate Functions	220

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Larry McSwain has been a patient teacher. I shall forever be grateful to Larry for his academic excellence and his pastor's heart.

Willis and Caroline Bennett were always generous with their time. Their marriage and their lives are an inspiration.

Ernie White encouraged this research more than he could ever have known and I am grateful for John Dever's willingness to guide it through its final stages on Ernie's behalf.

Walnut Street Baptist Church is every minister's dream of both a laboratory in which to test church and community ideas and a loving church family that models caring for its staff. I am the grateful recipient of their grace.

Jan Noland has covered my tracks more often than even I know. Her spirit is a generous gift both to me and to the church. She has made this process much easier with her abilities and her charm.

Many others have made time in their schedules to help me with this study, including Elaine Ozment, Cindy Meredith, Jane Jones, Bonnie Stowers, and Connie Merritt. They eased my journey on many occasions.

And finally, thank you Bryan. You always remind me

of what is truly important. Now your dad will read to you more than one book per night.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

George Willis Bennett has been a force for change in Southern Baptist life for over a half of a century. The effects of his work can be felt in homes in rural North Carolina and inner city Detroit. He has closely related to the highest denominational executives and the novice seminary students in their first ministerial experience. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of Bennett as an agent of denominational change. The focus of this dissertation will be on the impact of Bennett as an agent of change between Southern Baptist congregations and their communities.

The theoretical framework used in this dissertation will define the parameters and provide the evaluative criteria for the study. The model of evolutionary social change of Neil Smelser will be the central theoretical base of the dissertation. Smelser's theory is formulated in his published doctoral dissertation entitled Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An Application of Theory to the British Cotton Industry.[1] Smelser's theory of social

---

[1]Neil Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An Application of Theory to the British Cotton Industry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959).

change can also be found in Public Higher Education in California, a work commissioned by the California Commission on Higher Education regarding public school reform.[2]

This study of the ministry of Bennett includes the tracing of the theological, ethical, and sociological influences that have shaped Bennett. Bennett's thoughts have evolved since his days as the "preacher's kid" in rural North Carolina. As American society has developed, mutated, and stagnated, so there have been similar periods in Bennett's life. The results of his intellectual, spiritual, and academic growth are recorded in the lives of countless students and colleagues. But this is not only the story of the life of Bennett. This is also the story of the church and community department at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, two fruitful, vibrant churches in North Carolina, the field work program and the Doctor of Ministry degree at the seminary, the school of church social work, numerous successful urban evangelism efforts in the Southern Baptist Convention, the career placements of graduate students, and innumerable ripples of social change that will never be identified. As both a professor and an administrator, Bennett influenced the lives of seminary students for nearly a quarter of a century. And most of this work has been done within the system of the Southern Baptist Convention.

---

[2]Neil Smelser and Gabriel Almond, eds., Public Higher Education in California (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

Several religious systems are at work in the United States at any given time. These systems often overlap each other, sometimes compete with each other, and always affect the systems around them. As they each bump along an evolutionary trail, it is inevitable that periodically they bump into each other, thus influencing the growth and direction of the religious system. Within the system of religion in the United States, one can speak of the system of southern religion. And within that system, one finds southern protestant religion. Within that system lies evangelical religion, and in that one lies a large part of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Within the system of the SBC are found its churches, its mechanisms for theological education, its boards and agencies, and its individual players. This dissertation identifies these systems and their key figures, analyses the functional exigencies of the systems, and traces the path of evolution through the systems.

Bennett leaves a monumental legacy. The churches he served as pastor still reap the benefits of his leadership. They continue to be trend-setting, socially conscious congregations. In fact, one of the churches he served has most recently been served by a female pastor. His activities on school boards, boards of social welfare institutions, and denominational agencies focused the attention of these entities on the community around them as

the way it was at the time, not on how it "used to be." He worked to improve the future of farmers, preachers, and the cities. He was concerned about the social welfare of human beings and their spiritual welfare. Wherever he went, the lives of the people around him improved.

Bennett's years at Southern Seminary touched five decades. They were years of systemic expansion and differentiation. He presided over the birth and the development of the Church and Community department, still the only department of its kind in any Southern Baptist seminary. He guided the absorption of the Carver School of Missions and Social Work into the curriculum of the seminary and he became one of its most vocal advocates. He took a de-valued, fledgling field education office and guided it into the mainstream of a seminary student's curriculum. He expanded the opportunities of ministers not fortunate enough to attend a seminary in their own hometown and gave them an on-site experience for advanced academic work. Through these years of service, Bennett served in five administrative offices, one endowed chair of instruction, two departments, and numerous faculty committees.

Bennett is a person who "makes things happen." Larry McSwain calls him "a theoretician of the possible and a pragmatist of the first order."[3] These skills have made

---

[3]"Provost Bennett Leaves Innovative Legacy," The Tie 59 (Summer 1991), 12.

Bennett an invaluable resource to the agencies of the Southern Baptist Convention and Southern Seminary. His writings, lectures, research, and seminars have breathed new hope into embattled ministers and churches.

Bennett's retirement from the office of provost at the seminary signaled the end of one form of ministry. But it was another stepping stone for Bennett into a new adventure. On August 1, 1991, Bennett returned to the seminary classroom as Senior Professor of Church and Community at Southern Seminary. A new generation of seminary students are being exposed to the Southern Baptist pioneer in church and community ministries.

Background of the Study

The summer after my freshman year in college, I served as a janitor, bus driver, and softball umpire for a Baptist center in Springfield, Missouri. I was captivated by the purpose and work of the center. As the janitor, I cleaned up after literacy classes and sewing groups. I taught a class in the Mission Vacation Bible School. I sorted clothes in the clothes closet and organized canned goods in the food pantry. I sponsored inner-city children at their first week of church camp in the country. As the umpire, I learned first-hand of my ineptness in conflict management. But most importantly, I attended Sunday worship services in the chapel attached to the center. For the

first time in my middle-class suburban life, I experienced Christian fellowship with the urban poor. I learned how to work in an urban environment that summer, but it also aroused my desire to be an agent of social change in a community.

I returned to the center for two more summers as a student summer missionary appointed by the Missouri Baptist Convention. I learned how to manage a Baptist center, how to network with other agencies, and how to help urban dwellers appropriately. As my skills in urban ministry grew, so did my interest in learning more. I spent the summer after college graduation in a broader role with the Greene County Baptist Association encompassing the entire westside of Springfield. I helped seven different churches understand their community and design ministries to fit their church fields.

The decision to attend seminary at Southern was driven by the dream of entering the social work program. My Home Mission Board supervisors encouraged me that if I was truly interested in social ministry, then Southern was the seminary I should choose. The experiences in courses in my first year in seminary moved me toward the denominational ministries track of the Master of Divinity. I completed that degree in 1984. I was fortunate to gain a seminary position with the Walnut Street Baptist Church in the urban center of Louisville. After seminary, I stayed at the

church in a full-time position. Walnut Street has an aggressive ministry to Louisville's central city and the church sparked the tinder of urban ministry in my heart and mind once again. My desire for more insight into urban ministry led me back to the seminary to complete the Master of Theology degree in Church and Community in 1988. I entered the Doctor of Philosophy program that fall.

In graduate work at the seminary, I learned that Bennett had been a silent partner in my pilgrimage. Through his advocacy at the Home Mission Board for urban missions program, his involvement in the social work program at the seminary, his relationship with my faculty supervisor, and his Doctor of Ministry supervision of the director of missions in the Baptist association where I served as a summer missionary, Bennett had been influencing my life in ways I never dreamed. I could not have identified his name, but I certainly identified his work.

My interest in Bennett has grown as the number of my church and community experiences have increased. I have seen the far-ranging effects of Bennett's life. His students are in significant places of leadership in the Baptist community. His programs are institutionalized in denominational agencies. His contributions to the seminary are experienced by students every day.

The occasion of the retirement of Bennett from the office of Provost at Southern Seminary on July 31, 1991,

signaled the end of an era of service spanning a third of a century. But his footprints are indelibly left in the life of the seminary and his denomination.

Methodology

The first chapter of the dissertation relates the purpose, background, and methodology of the study. The second chapter presents a theory of systemic evolutionary change advanced by Smelser. Smelser's search for causality leads to an analysis of the social setting, or environment, of the system, impetus for change in the system, the forces that mobilize change, and the boundaries that control and shape the change. When one understands the resistance to change, a clear picture comes into view of how and where change can be accomplished.

The second chapter delves into the theoretical work of Smelser and his understanding of social change. The environment of the system provides the parameters of the system. The system uses its boundaries to distinguish itself from the larger environmental system. The boundaries are the values that the system cherishes. A system may decide to move itself out of a recognizable shape or even enter entropy in order to maintain the integrity of its values. Chapter two explains the processes and the choices the system makes along boundary issues.

The impetus to change is the "steam engine" that drives the need to change. No system can change until the system determines there is a need to change. The impetus to change is usually a disruption in one of the functional components of the system. This dissertation offers an explanation for the push to innovate and change the Southern Baptist system during the tenure of Bennett.

But the need for change is not sufficient. The need must be matched by internal forces willing to push the system to innovate. Powerful forces are required to be marshalled by the impetus in order for the change to last. These forces may eventually distort the "look" of the system so that it is no longer recognizable. Bennett used a number of forces that he banded together through the years. He also acquired a great deal of personal power to influence others to join the force for change.

Systems theorists realize that resistance is an expected response to potential innovations in the system. Resistance is a significant discussion in the dissertation. To ignore the resistance is to open the door of opportunity for the changes to be lost to the reinforcement of the status quo.

Smelser's theoretical roots are found in Durkheim and Parsons. Like his predecessors, Smelser is convinced that system differentiation is a natural and desirable outcome of the growth of a system. Smelser expresses

differentiation through four functional exigencies of every healthy system. The four functions are adaptation (A), goal-attainment (G), integration (I), and latent pattern maintenance (L). This dissertation will look at each of the four functions to discover how Bennett moved among the system to exact change.

Chapter Three is a descriptive analysis of Bennett's life-span and his participation in the Southern Baptist Convention. The chapter begins in childhood and ends with his retirement from the seminary. To a functional sociologist, Bennett's life itself is a structure that has been built by input from innumerable sources. This chapter seeks to trace some of those sources in order to understand Bennett better. The chapter looks for clues in Bennett's early life as to the results of his adult life. His marriage and his family life is also explored here. The chapter then turns to focus on Bennett's influence with the SBC. It traces the story of Bennett's rise in popularity and consequently, his rise in status. The chapter shows the values that Bennett used to exert change. The documentation for the chapter relies on interviews with key figures in Bennett's SBC involvement. The chapter ends with a look at Bennett's writing ministry, most of which is found in SBC publications.

Chapter Four describes Bennett's influence at the seminary. His is a relatively rare story. A young

professor moved up the ladder of the seminary to the second-highest office in the seminary, and even the highest office for three months. From a systems perspective, there has to be a reason that the system rewarded Bennett with influential positions. Bennett also pursued additional education to equip himself for one of his roles at the seminary. Particular attention is given to the theoretical input provided by Harvey Cox, Gibson Winter, and others. Bennett was integrally involved in the development of the Church and Community department and in the Carver School of Church Social Work. It is necessary to tell the story of these entities in order to tell Bennett's story. This chapter uses interviews with colleagues and former students, minutes of trustee and faculty meetings, and other primary sources available in the seminary's archives and catalogs.

The fifth chapter provides the critical analysis of Bennett as an agent of change using the theory expounded by Smelser in the second chapter. The key components of boundaries, environments, and resistance are discussed. Bennett's doctoral dissertation provides early clues for the boundaries that guide his life; this chapter shows how he built those same values into the denomination. This chapter provides a model for how Bennett moved in the systems of Baptist life to exert the force that pushed for innovation, repelled resistors, and institutionalized the change. A section is included that critiques Bennett's choices in the

path of change. Bennett's choice to be a change agent made a difference in his life and the lives of others.

Chapter 2

A FUNCTIONAL FOUNDATION FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL CHANGE

Functionalism, in the sociological use of the word, was born in the natural sciences and appropriated into the social sciences. Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) were some of the first social scientists to apply biological principles to human organizations. In their writings can be found the early ideas of an evolutionary process at work in human society.[1]

Emile Durkheim (1866-1917) argued that any sociological explanation "should consist of the discovery, firstly, of a phenomenon's cause and, secondly, of its function."[2] Durkheim was one of the first social scientists to identify and classify organizations according to their cohesion systems. He called these two classifications "mechanical solidarity" and "organic solidarity." Mechanical solidarity is found in primitive

---

[1]Lauer writes that Spencer, in fact, was the first scientist to coin the term "survival of the fittest," which he applied to human society. Robert H. Lauer, Perspectives on Social Change, 4th ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), p. 61.

[2]G. Duncan Mitchell, ed., A New Dictionary of the Social Sciences (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1979), p. 86.

social organizations. A mechanical society is characterized by homogeneity that is maintained by repressive sanctions against those who deviate. The boundaries of social organization in a mechanical world are rules enforced by laws. Organic solidarity, Durkheim says, reflects an advanced state of human evolution involving heterogeneity and differentiation. The purpose of laws in an organic organization is to establish equilibrious relationships that hold the organization together. The laws are much more subtle, but equally potent in maintaining order.[3]

Durkheim's curiosity in the cause and effect phenomenon has also helped to promote an interest in the study of functionalism. Early social scientists, in fact the natural sciencists, too, seem to have been consumed with the discovery of evolutionary processes that brought "modern society" to its advanced level of development.[4] Critics of functionalism point to causal discussions as the most tenuous aspects of functionalism. Cohen feels that functionalism has tended to identify too quickly the causes to which systems respond. He writes

---

[3]Lauer, Social Change, p. 67.

[4]It is not difficult, then, to imagine how this fascination with human development in the social sciences concurred with the early twentieth-century theological fascination with post-millenialism. One can only imagine that the seminary's own interest in "Christian Sociology," documented in Chapter 4, was inspired by the sociological and theological affirmation of the evolutionary process resulting in a redeemed society.

> As philosophical critics, followed in turn by social scientists, have long shown, those explanations of social phenomena which are truly and simply functionalist are seriously flawed: they are teleological in that they account for items by examining their positive consequences in maintaining a wider system of which they are a part; and they reify such systems by treating them as though they were either mechanical or organic wholes.[5]

The response of functional sociologists to these kinds of charges has been to develop identifiable, continuous, and repetitive "feedback" loops that demonstrate cause and effect relationships measurably and diachronically.

The result of the work of these pioneers in sociology is that functionalism[6] can be said to be one of the major branches of modern sociology. Functionalism experienced perhaps its most expansive period in the writings of Talcott Parsons (1902-1979). Parsons added the concept of structural investigation to the work of the pioneers to coin a new term, "structural-functionalism." Parsons was as interested in the actual social structures of society as he was in their functions.[7] Pierre van den

---

[5]Percy S. Cohen, "Functional Analysis," in The Social Science Encyclopedia, Eds. Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 324. Cohen, of course, is responding to sociology's early fascination with primitive cultures. The discovery of modern "stone age" tribes were often seen as providing the missing anthropological/sociological link in human development.

[6]For the purpose of this chapter, the terms "structural-functionalism," "functionalism," and "systems analysis" are used interchangably.

[7]Lauer, Social Change, p. 82.

Berghe summarizes the basics of Parson's understanding of structural-functionalism in seven statements:

1. Societies must be analyzed as wholes, as "systems of interrelated parts";

2. Cause and effect relationships are "multiple and reciprocal";

3. Social systems exist in a state of "dynamic equilibrium" such that adjustments to forces impinging on the system is made with minimal change within the system;

4. Perfect integration is never realized, so that every social system has strains and deviations, but the latter tend to be neutralized through institutionalization;

5. Change is basically a slow, adaptive process rather than a revolutionary shift;

6. Change is the result of adjustment to changes outside the system, growth by differentiation, and internal innovations; and

7. The system is integrated through shared values.[8]

Parsons defines a "social system" as

> a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect, actors who are motivated in terms of a tendency to the "optimization of gratification" and whose relation to their situations, including each other, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols.[9]

---

[8]Pierre L. van den Berghe, "Dialectic and Functionalism: Toward a Synthesis," in System, Change, and Conflict, ed. N. J. Demerath III and Richard A. Peterson (New York: Free Press, 1967), pp. 294-95; as found in Robert H. Lauer, Perspectives on Social Change, 4th ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), p. 81.

[9]Talcott Parsons, The Social System (New York: Free Press, 1951), pp. 5-6.

To understand the system, Parsons says, one must identify the boundaries, functions, patterns, and individual units, or structures, that comprise the whole.

Levy writes that

> Simply speaking, structural-functional analysis consists of nothing more complicated than phrasing empirical questions in one of the following several forms or some combination of them: (1) What observable uniformities (or patterns) can be discovered or alleged to exist in the phenomena studied? (2) What conditions (empirical state of affairs) resultant from previous operations can be discovered or alleged to exist in the phenomena studied? (3) When process . . . can be discovered to take place in terms of observable uniformities, what resultant conditions can be discovered?[10]

Levy summarizes the three questions of structural-functionalism as "What structures are involved?," "What functions have resulted?," and "What functions take place in terms of a given structure?"[11] The underlying assumption of functionalism is that "cultural phenomena either have uses, and otherwise would not endure, or that they come into being . . . because they are useful." Either way, the social entity fulfills a function.[12]

One of the most popular applications of functionalism is found in the business and industrial

---

[10]Marion J. Levy, Jr., "Functional Analysis: Structural-Functional Analysis," in The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. David L. Sills (n.p.: Macmillan and Co. and the Free Press, 1968), p. 22.

[11]Ibid.

[12]Percy S. Cohen, "Functional Analysis," in The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, ed. David L. Sills (n.p.: Macmillan and Co. and The Free Press, 1968).

community. Writers like von Bertalanffy and Churchman have added a large amount of literature and research to the field. Ackoff and Emery, key proponents of an organizational application of functionalism, define a "system" as "a set of interrelated elements, each of which is related directly or indirectly to every other element, and no subset of which is unrelated to any other subset.[13]

Parsons writes that every system has four functions it performs. These functions are imperative for the maintenance of the system. Parsons' "Four Function Paradigm" is composed of the functions of latent-pattern maintenance, integration, adaptation, and goal attainment. The paradigm revolves on two primary axes which lie on two planes, vertical and horizontal. The vertical axis, the "internal-external" axis, concerns the relation of the system to its environment. Like all living organisms, the system is "open," that is, it must interact with the environment to draw nourishment. But it also must draw boundaries to distinguish itself from the environment. The interactions with the environment may be considered as either outputs from the system or inputs into it.[14]

---

[13]R. L. Ackoff and F. E. Emery, "Human Organizations as Systems" in Systems Thinking: Volume One, ed. F. E. Embry (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 380.

[14]Parsons, The Social System, p. 11.

On the external-internal axis, the latent-pattern maintenance (L) function defines the system as distinctive from its environment (see figure 2.1). Internally, L provides the pattern of continuity over time. It accomplishes its task by protecting and promoting the values of the system. Parsons writes that the organic equivalent of L in the biological world is the preservation of the gene pool.[15] Smelser and Parsons write that "It is the pattern which defines the distinctive nature of the system as contrasted with its environments."[16] This function sets the social patterns to which the system will adhere. In structural-functional terms, this function provides the culture of the system. The boundaries, therefore, are the norms or values by the system adopted to hold the system together. Durkheim would call this level of development organic solidarity. In the organic model, boundaries serve as both definers and retainers between the system and the external environment. The integrity of the system is intact as long as the boundaries, or values, are secure.[17]

The other function on the external-internal axis, the adaptation function (A), concerns the relationship between the system and the environment. Its primary task is

---

[15]Ibid., p. 13.

[16]Ibid.

[17]Lauer, Social Change, p. 83.

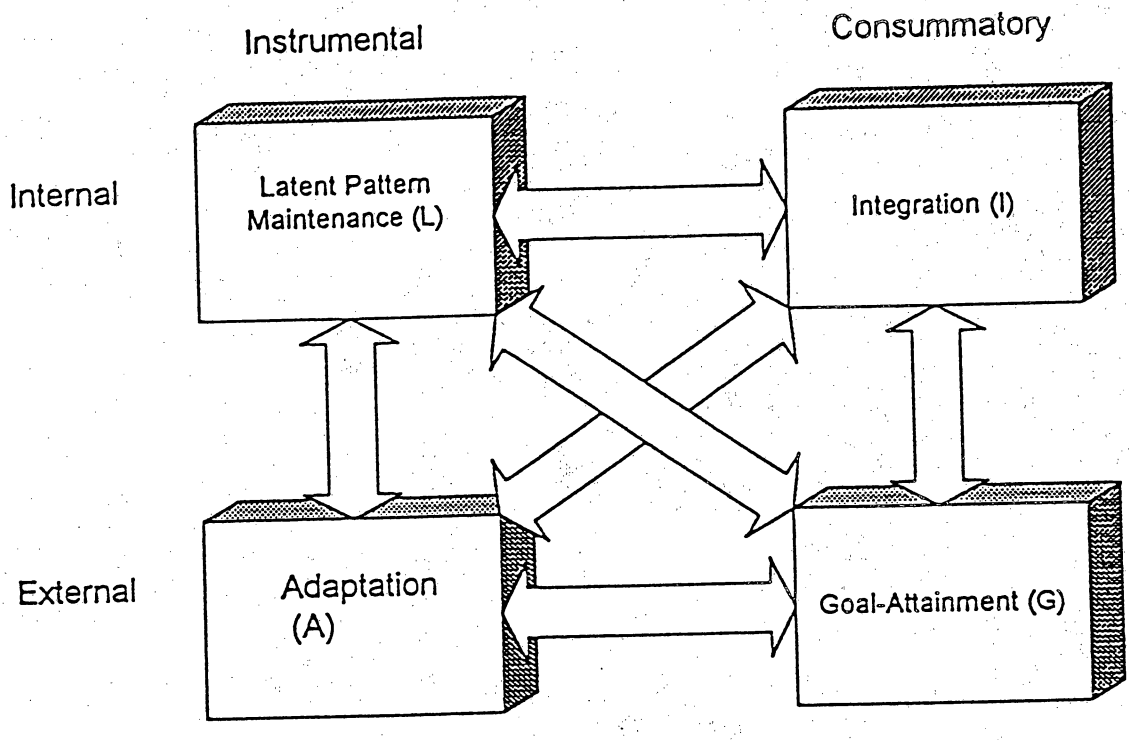

Figure 2.1

The Inter-relationship between the Functional Exigencies in a System.

Source: Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt, The American University (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 9.

to gain the resources needed for the system to function.[18] The adaptive function is the evolutionary force of the model. It both acts and reacts to the environment, but always with the needs of the system in mind. This function adapts the needs of the system to the input from the environment.[19]

One of the values of a theological seminary is an emphasis on theological education, as opposed to an arts and science, general education offered in a public university. Seminaries often use doctrinal statements to define the boundary even more clearly. The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary uses a document entitled "The Abstract of Principles" to define the theological content of courses taught at the seminary. When the abstract is violated by an instructor, then the boundaries tighten so that the instructor either conforms to the values dictated by the abstract or is expelled by the system.

A seminary may also value specific issues like pacifism, social action, academic freedom, or academic license. These values help distinguish the institution from other academic entities. A seminary relies on input in the

---

[18]Ibid., p. 84.

[19]Neil J. Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 13. To help the reader get a clearer picture of structural-functionalism, I will use the analogy of a theological seminary as an example of a system throughout this chapter.

form of new students to supply revenue and enrollment quotas to operate the school. But a seminary often restricts the acceptance of new students based on certain criteria, the contents of which comprise the boundary of the system. On the other end of the system's axis, the seminary sends the students back out into the environment, lest the system become taxed and over-burdened. Now acculturated to the seminary system, the graduates influence the multiplication of gene pools from which new students are born.

The adaptive function, in the seminary setting, is performed by the development office. One of its tasks is to secure adequate financial endowment from the environment outside the seminary to keep the system fueled. The president's office, which serves as the office of the ambassador for the seminary, also fills the adaptive function. This office is the "front line" of defense. It is the office that receives the first feedback if the exigencies of the system and those of the environment are mismatched. A classic example of the adaptive function occurs when the president says to the dean, "I don't care how you get it done, just make sure it's done."

The horizontal axis Smelser and Parsons call the "instrumental-consummatory" axis. There are two functions on this axis; their work is focused on the forward movement and efficiency of the system. The Goal Attainment Function (G) provides the structures and processes necessary for the

system to function effectively and efficiently. This function also monitors the success of the system in matching the programs with the goals of the system so that the goals are fulfilled.[20] The creative exigencies of this function distinguish it from A, which is more concerned with survival than creativity. G creates the structures that facilitate the system to do its work.[21] The administrative offices in a seminary fulfill this function. The field education supervisor, the academic dean, the student affairs office, the computer manager's office, and the campus library are examples of the goal attainment function at work. In colloquial usage, these are the "worker bees" who provide the daily activity to keep the system moving. Anyone who doubts the importance of this function has never experienced the frustration of needing something from one of these offices in order to complete a task, only to discover that the office is closed for vacation or the secretary is on a break. Citing the above example of the mandate of the president, this is the office which must find a creative way to "get done" whatever the president orders. This function takes the available resources and develops a plan to adapt the system to a perceived need.

The final function, Integration (I), is the internal adaptive mechanism of the system. I supplies the force

---

[20]Lauer, Social Change, p. 84.

[21]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 13.

within the system to differentiate the system from the environment. This function is both what keeps the system together and what makes it unique in the environment. The integrative function creates the mechanisms necessary to sustain the system. The internal stability of a system is maintained by this function; consequently, it is also best measured in this function. The insight of how well the ministries of a church are integrated within its individual members, for example, will demonstrate the viability of the church to sustain itself at the status quo.[22] In the seminary example, this function is primarily filled by the faculty. The task of the faculty is to collate the resources provided by the administrative offices and the needs of the students to create graduates.

Although The Social System is Parson's best known work, his key concepts can be found in a number of his writings. Perhaps the clearest statement of Parson's concepts is found in his 1973 work, The American University.[23] Parsons writes that "action" means "human behavior insofar as it is symbolically oriented."[24] The concept of "action" conjures up images of living organisms for the reader. That is precisely Parson's point. Social systems are living

---

[22]Ibid., p. 14.

[23]Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt, The American University (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 8.

[24]Ibid.

organisms holding a plurality of living organisms. These organisms, or individual units of actions, often can be classified in one of the system's functions. Another option, however, is that one of the units may cross over into two or more of the system's functions, as indicated by Figure 2.2. The social system responds to external and internal stimuli. It makes decisions and acts upon those decisions. It uses biological-type processes to sustain its life or even to reproduce. The social system has a life of its own.

Smelser's Contribution to the Study

Perhaps one of Parson's best known students was Neil Joseph Smelser. Smelser was born in July, 1930, in Kahoka, Missouri. He holds the Bachelor Arts (summa cum laude, 1952) and the Doctor of Philosophy (1958) from Harvard University. He completed the Bachelor of Arts with first class honors as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University in 1954. He completed the Master of Arts at Oxford in 1958.

Smelser's first teaching position was at the University of California, Berkeley, as assistant professor of sociology from 1958-60. Smelser has been at Berkeley since then. He was promoted to University Professor of Sociology in 1972, a position he still holds. Smelser has been the

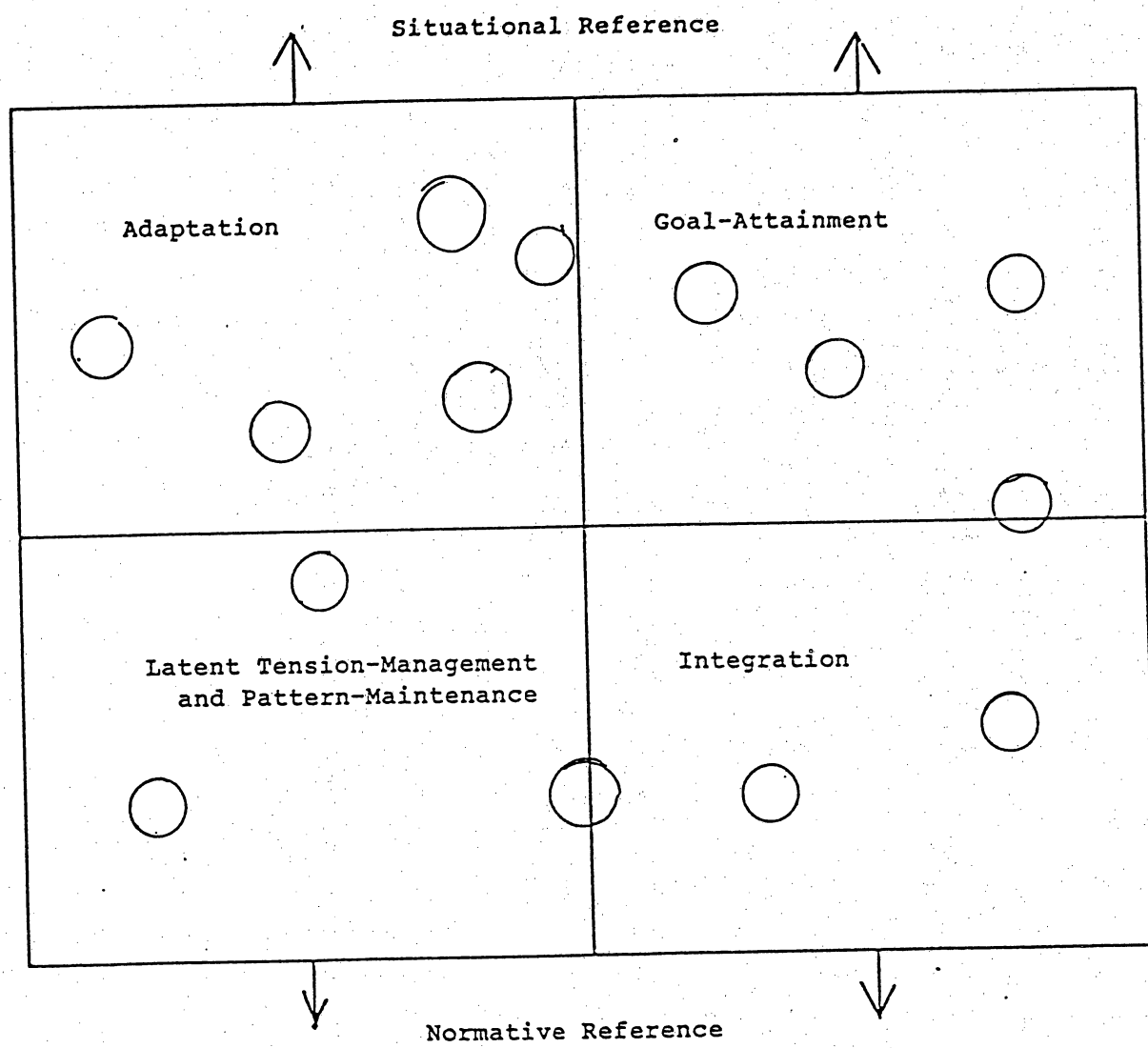

Figure 2.2

The Functional Dimensions
of a Social System

Source: Neil Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution, p. 13. The small circles indicate the specific activities, collectivities, and individuals located in a system.

recipient of a number of significant research grants and fellowships from prestigious institutions, including the National Science Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the National Institute of Education, and a Guggenheim Fellowship.

Smelser's first published work was with Parsons, his Harvard major professor.[25] Smelser's dissertation was published as Social Change in the Industrial Revolution in 1959.[26] Smelser has been a prolific author since these early works. The breadth of his research and writing is impressive. He has authored sociology textbooks into several editions, written on economic, educational, and classical sociology issues, and conducted comparative studies between psychology and sociology. In fact, one of his most interesting books is Themes of Love and Work in Adulthood, co-authored with Erik Erikson.[27]

At the time Smelser was completing his doctoral dissertation, much of the body of literature of structural-functionalism had already been written. But noticeably missing from the literature was research in how social change occurs in a structural-functional theory. Smelser's

---

[25]Talcott Parsons and Neil J. Smelser, Economy and Society (Glencoe, IL: Free Press of Glencoe, 1956).

[26]Smelser, Social Change.

[27]Neil J. Smelser and Erik Erikson, Themes of Love and Work in Adulthood (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980).

dissertation provides a theoretical structure for social change that complements structural-functional analysis.

The Nature of Social Structure

Smelser, in one of his numerous textbooks, discusses his understanding of the nature of social structure. Understanding social structure, according to Smelser, is at the center of sociological inquiry. The structural discussion of the scientific enterprise of sociology seeks to discover "(1)regularities in whatever part of nature it undertakes to investigate (and regularities mean repeated, nonrandom activities) and (2)systematic relationships among things it studies."[28] For Smelser, all of the sciences, whether natural or behavioral, are concerned with the nature of the structure of the subject studied. Picking up once again on the illustration of a seminary as a system, in order to qualify as a social structure, the seminary must have both regular, non-random processes and systematic relationships between the entities in the system. First, the seminary repeats a significant number of processes each year. New students are incorporated, older students are graduated. Each student follows in the same degree track followed by her predecessor. The results are predictable. If a student follows the process, then the student will graduate.

---

[28]Neil J. Smelser, Handbook of Sociology (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1988), p. 103.

Second, the individual units of the seminary, for example offices, classrooms, and roles, exist in a specific system. If one unit collapses, the impact is felt throughout the system. The units can be said to have a dependent relationship with each other.

Smelser, extending the work of Parsons, understands that a discussion of structure includes six dimensions. First, the discussion "calls for the specification of basic units of analysis which make up the 'parts' or 'elements.'"[29] Smelser writes that these basic units of analysis include

> [first] certain relational characteristics that arise from the location and interaction among individual persons, as role relationships, in the complex patterning of role relationships into institutional form (market structure, family structure, along lines of wealth, powers, and prestige; and second, relational characteristics among groups, or social associations involving common interaction, membership, feeling of belonging, and identification as such those outside the group.[30]

Following the example of a seminary, the specification of units of analysis means not only identification of the central figures, it includes the identification of lines of authority, department structures, faculty tenure tracks,

---

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

seniority rankings and the less tangible connections like a sense of collegiality, competitiveness, and school pride.[31]

Second, the idea of structure "implies that the basic units have some kind of special or non-random relationship to one another."[32] It is not an accident that the academic affairs office reports to the faculty which students are cleared to graduate. The faculty relies on the academic office to keep the records of students' achievements and the office relies on the faculty to teach the classes for the students to complete degree requirements.

Third, Smelser contends that the basic elements of analysis are "repetitive in space and time." This is a necessary component to provide for the dynamic nature of functional analysis. In fact, Smelser suggests that

> structure and process are two expressions of the same thing: Structure is a kind of generalization based on observations of repeated processes of interaction among the basic units of analysis, and process is the behavioral manifestation and evidence for structure.[33]

---

[31]A classic example of how an attitude may form a social unit was given by Robert Proctor in my interview with him on June 3, 1993. His comment was that the Theology faculty thought of the Religious Education faculty as "second class." He spoke of a "wall" that separated the theology and religious education faculty and kept them from socializing across the wall. To him, the wall was as real a social structure as if the two faculties had been on two separate campuses.

[32]Smelser, Handbook of Sociology, p. 104.

[33]Ibid.

The system needs repetition to establish processes. If every function in the system required an innovation, then the resources of the system would be consumed with energy expenditures. Structure provides the framework for regularity in the system and process provides the dynamic nature of the system. In anatomical terms, the structure is the skeleton that keeps the human body together, but the organs and muscles provide the nutrition and activity that the skeleton needs to survive.

A fourth quality of the notion of structure is that the relationships within a structure are different from relationships with entities that are perceived to be outside the structure. This provides for Smelser's conception of boundaries. Smelser writes,

> If there were no differences between interactions within a structure and interactions without (for example, if all these interactions were random), the concept of structure would disappear altogether, because there would be no basis for identifying it as such. The idea of a structure, in a word, implies the idea of a qualitatively different nonstructure.[25]

The boundaries give the system its distinctive characteristics. The Abstract of Principles distinguishes Southern Seminary from St. Meinrad Seminary or Asbury Seminary. The structure of the seminary is needed to support the boundaries. If Southern did not have a unique purpose, that is to train ministers according to the doctrinal statement, then it would not be qualitatively

---

[25]Ibid., p. 105.

different from any other degree conferring entity in the south.

An extension of the concept of boundary provides the fifth quality. Smelser writes that "this notion of difference-from-outside gives rise to the notion of structure-in-situation or structure-in-environment."[26] This quality includes the degree of openness of the internal structure from the external environment. The boundary provides the intensity of the influence from the environment. In some years of the seminary's history, when the abstract may have been taken lightly, the propensity for the extraordinary influence of an outside entity was heightened. In other years, when the boundary is drawn tighter, the system has a smaller degree of openness to the influences in the environment.

Smelser's sixth quality of social structure is one he calls the most tentative. It is the understanding of the reasons or causes of structure. Why and how the system differentiates itself from its environment and why and how the system hangs together is the cause of sociological arguments. In terms of the seminary, why did Boyce and Broadus, the co-founders of Southern Seminary, decide to create a seminary at all? In the broader scope of this dissertation, why did Willis Bennett take on the role of change agent in the Southern Baptist Convention? It is to

---

[26]Ibid.

Smelser's understanding of that process that this discussion turns next.[27]

Smelser's Theory of Social Change

Smelser's doctoral dissertation at Harvard, written while he was studying under Parsons, is a discussion of the industrial revolution in the British cotton industry from 1770 to 1840. The first two chapters of the book are the delineation of his theory; the remaining chapters flesh the theory out in terms of the cotton industry.

Smelser writes that all societies have in common at least two qualities, complexity and differentiation. Growth and development in society are two requirements of the above qualities. Smelser contends that these qualities can be recorded, measured, and studied, even in social systems in the midst of transition. Smelser's study of this process proceeds in two parts. First, he advances a theory of social change. And second, he relates the empirical instance of change.[28]

At the heart of Smelser's theory lies the conviction that

> When one social role or organization becomes archaic under changing historical circumstances, it differentiates by a definite and specific sequence of events into

---

[27]Ibid., p. 107.

[28]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 2.

> two or more roles or organizations which function more effectively in the new historical circumstances.[29]

These new units are distinctively different from each other. He illustrates this point with an example from family life. The family may become, under external or internal pressure, incapable or incompetent to fulfill its ascribed functions. Dissatisfaction erupts when experiences fall short of expectations. Social controls are exerted to harness the energy produced by the eruption. If successful, the family system evolves into one or more new social units.[29] A rather simple illustration is a family where a teenager pushes the boundaries that were acceptable during childhood but are too restrictive for adolescence. The teenager turns sixteen and demands to be permitted to drive the family car. As dissatisfaction intensifies, conflict erupts. The social controls of early parenthood and early adolescence are applied, but the energy from the dissatisfaction is too strong and the family system evolves into new social units with new boundaries. The teenager gets his driving license and an automobile; new boundaries and social units are in place.

Smelser notes two implications of his model that need to be recognized from the beginning. First, he contends that his model is applicable to many types of social

---

[29]Ibid.

[29]Ibid., p. 3.

structure. He hints at a universality of application of his model, but stops short of making such a claim. Second, Smelser is convinced that social change occurs sequentially and temporally. Randomness does not have a role in his understanding of social systems. Because the change occurs sequentially, his theory holds predictive qualities, in both sequence and time.[30]

Smelser's methodology is in three parts. First, he advances "empty theoretical boxes" that provide the framework for the study. Second, he fills the boxes with a number of different qualities to promote discussion of the resultant propositions. And third, he examines the empirical data as a test for his general theory. The outline of this dissertation roughly follows that same format. This chapter presents Smelser's empty theoretical boxes and suggests qualities that fill those boxes in the context of the topic. The third and fourth chapters provide the empirical data for drawing a conclusion about the effectiveness of Bennett as a change agent. The last chapter, then, evaluates the effectiveness of these boxes and qualities at describing the social change that has occurred and the role of the change agent in that process.

---

[30]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 4.

A General Theory of Action

Smelser understands a "system of action" to be generated whenever two or more units interact with each other in a given environment. These units are inherently interdependent; they influence and react to each other and to the external situation. The principle of equilibrium governs their behavior. When the system has achieved equilibrium, the units turn to a new position. When the system is disequilibrious, the tendency is to change to a new state of equilibrium or to disintegrate. The social system is composed of a set of roles, groupings, institutions, and so on, organized into sub-systems and subject to institutionalized controls.[31]

Smelser defines the components of the social system at three concrete levels. The system consists of first, sets of activities, second, roles, and third, organizations or collectivities composed of sub-roles.[32] The social system is subject to a number of higher controls. Overall, the system is governed by a value-system that defines and legitimizes its activities. These values are "institutionalized into regulatory patterns which govern the interaction of the more concrete units."[33] These concrete units to-

---

[31]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 10.

[32]Smelser later contends that all three of these levels constitute his understanding of "role."

[33]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 11.

gether form social sub-systems which gather around the "functional imperatives governing the social system." In the context of his doctoral research, he contends that individual factories during the British industrial revolution are a part of a larger system of British industry, which in turn has relationships with other social systems.[34] In terms of this dissertation, one could say that individual churches are subsystems that gather around functional imperatives to form a larger system of Protestant religion in America which interacts with other religious systems.

"Roles" help the system to function. But what functions do they contribute to the system? Smelser's connection to Parsons is most evident at this point. Following Parson's model as discussed above, Smelser contends that there are "four functional exigencies" that must be met to keep the system or return the system to equilibrium. Smelser adds his own unique interpretations to Parsons' work.

"Latent pattern-maintenance and tension-management" (L) governs the nature, goals, and means of attaining those goals in the social system. Since the system's first priority is to "preserve the integrity of the value system itself and to assure that individual actors conform to it," this role is fulfilled through the socialization and education of

---

[34]Ibid., p. 19.

the individuals in the system. L also provides the tension mechanisms for resolving individual disturbances.[35]

"Goal attainment" (G) is the function that establishes and maintains the system's relationships with the external environment. This relationship drives the social system to be directed toward a goal or a set of goals. When the system has no goals left, it is left to entropy.

"Adaptation" (A) provides for multi-variant drives for goals simultaneously. That is, the system drives toward a plurality of goals in pursuit of its larger purpose.

And "integration" (I) is the function that maintains smooth interactions between and among the individual players in the social system.[36] The integration function reinforces the internal boundaries so that the systems maintain a working relationship that follows predictable and necessary processes.

These four "functions" are not the individual players. The concrete players and processes are organized into sub-systems that interact with each other. The functions provide the "dimensions" by which to catalog and classify the interactions in and by the system. Second, these functions are the things the system must do to operate with effectiveness and efficiency. Figure 2.2 illustrates the

---

[35]Ibid., p. 11.

[36]Ibid., p. 12.

relationship between the four functions. The individual circles are the activities, roles, or sub-systems which make significant contributions to the function in which they are placed. The lower two functions, L and I, relate to the cultural norms that govern the system. A and G relate to social placement of the social system. These functions are constant, regardless of the individual composition of a given system.[37]

Sub-System Relationships

So far in this discussion, only the content of the social system has been discussed. But how do these four functions work together? Smelser offers help when he reminds the reader that all systems (S) can be broken into subsystems (s), which may themselves be treated as S. The division into s falls generally along functional lines, meaning that A may be spoken of as an s of S, that is, a subsystem of the system. The critical understanding at this point is that the "boundary interchanges" connect the functional subsystems together. Boundary interchanges "specify the conditions of exchange between the units," that is, the expectations and sanctions one subsystem may place on another. Smelser sees two types of interchanges between the subsystems. First, internal interchanges are those which outline the conditions on which the subsystems

---

[37]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 12.

interact based on the internal values. Second, external interchanges outline the relationships between the subsystems and the environment based on the values that separate the system from the environment.[38] Referring to Figure 2.2, the lines separating the boxes from other boxes are the determinants and limits on how the subsystems may interact with each other. The lines separating the boxes from the outside environment are the determinants and limiters on how the subsystems may interact with the environment.

The Sequence of Change

As a true "structural-functionalist," Smelser is concerned with structural differentiation. He perceives this type of evolutionary change as the most critical examination in growing and developing social systems. As stated earlier, he contends that structural change is sequential, verifiable, and predictable.

The sequence of change begins with a dissatisfaction with the goal-achievements of the system (S_G). The source of the dissatisfaction often lies outside S in an external pressure. At the same time, the adaptive function (S_A) seeks to correct the imbalance. The disturbance alerts mechanisms of social control that attempt to "handle" the disequilibrium by mobilizing resources. These resources

---

[38]Ibid., p. 14.

move toward more and more specific proposals to either adapt or innovate. Smelser writes that "favorable innovations are rewarded by extraordinary sanctions and then gradually routinized."[39]

Smelser has broken the sequence of social change into seven stages. It is important to note that Smelser does not consider these stages either consistently distinct or final. A process may move backwards or laterally, under necessary circumstances.

Stage one occurs when dissatisfaction is experienced and expressed by individuals or collectives in a system or subsystem. A necessary component is the sense by the collectivity that change is possible within the system. Smelser writes that "many dissatisfactions boil down to the feeling that role-performance is inadequate." That feeling may be accompanied by a frustration with the use of available resources in the social system.[40]

Stage two is the actual eruption, or disturbance, in the system or sub-system. These eruptions are viewed by the forces of equilibrium as "unjustified negative emotional reactions" or "unrealistic aspirations." Smelser also calls this stage "psychic disturbances." The eruptions may take several forms, including riots, strikes, and systemic

---

[39]Ibid., p. 15.

[40]Ibid., p. 16.

dysfunction.[41] Consequently, the system fails to respond to the perceived dissatisfaction and fails to work to restore equilibrium.[42]

Stage three is the "covert handling" of the new tension that results from the disturbance. The forces of equilibrium respond by reinforcing the current value-system, thus attempting to stretch the status quo to adopt the concerns of the disruptions. The value system, interestingly, provides the original framework for a discussion of the disturbances. In other words, the same value-system that expresses those values also provides the resources for criticizing and possible dismantling of the value system. The value-system does not drive the change; it may, however, supply the restrictions that both drive and shape the change.[43]

Stage four is the "encouragement of the resulting proliferation of new ideas." The system itself generates energy to "brainstorm" alternative ways of perceiving reality. The system at this point does not yet assign responsibility for implementation to specific subsystems but simply allows room for discussion. Just as the system does

---

[41]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 14.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Smelser, Industrial Revolution.

not at this stage assign responsibility, it likewise does not assign blame for real or imagined failure.[44]

Stage five contains the concrete steps the system now takes to institutionalize the attempts at stability. Assignments are made to various sub-systems. The values are intentionally shaped to conform to the new ideas. Those ideas that were once new and radical are by this stage a part of the system itself.[45]

Stage six holds the rewards or punishments for responsible implementation of the innovations carried out in step five. The risk factor must be considered strongest at this stage. At this level, the prior value-system is making its last attempts to provide equilibrium in the system without having to adjust to the newest intruders. The value system that legitimated earlier systems now provides the factor of legitimation or rejection of the challenges to the system.[46]

Stage seven is the routinization of the changes into the usual patterns of both performance and sanction. The change has become the status quo. The change is no longer radical and extraordinary. As part of the system, it is now susceptible to threats and challenges from outside the system. As it has changed the system, so it must now work

---

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid.

[46]Ibid., p. 17.

to defend the system from intruders or risk its own demise or anachronicity.[47]

What is the role of the value-system in Smelser's sequence? Smelser writes that it is "first the source of the criteria for perceiving, evaluating, and controlling the achievements of the social system." The value-system identifies appropriate or inappropriate ways that individual actors in a system may express their dissatisfaction or approval. The value-system also judges appropriate steps to undertake change. It legitimizes and approves new ideas and plans, therefore, it limits the direction and degree of change.[48] Smelser leaves the discussion of values change to other theorists and other studies. His focus is on structural change.

The Role of the Change Agent

Smelser is a systems analyst. His primary concern is with the macrocosmic perspective of social change. Consequently, he spends very little time discussing the roles of individual players in the system or sub-system. But yet his later writings indicate that he believes individuals can change the system. So what is the role of the change agent in Smelser's work?

---

[47]Ibid.

[48]Ibid., p. 16.

First, I suggest that the expressions of the disruptions, that is psychic disturbances, in the system and the vocalization of the dissatisfaction with the parameters of the system come primarily from human voices. Whether the issue is a labor strike, a product boycott, or a fundamentalist reaction to a perceived liberal ruling body, the disruptions must be experienced in terms of human lives. The change agent, then, takes on the role of vocalizer of social discontent. This person may be the victim of the system, as in the case of a person who feels discriminated against because of a minority status, or this person may be the champion of the oppressed. Smelser does not discuss at all a person's motivation for vocalizing discontent except for a feeling of frustration. The change agent in a social system, then, is one that vocalizes the discontent for those unable or unwilling to do so for themselves.

Second, the change agent must be willing to accept responsibility for brainstorming ideas for change and then take the initiative to implement them. The change agent risks a great deal to accept the role because, especially early on in the sequence, the entire system is mobilizing against him/her. The value system does not reinforce the need to change. The change agent must make a deliberate decision to be an agent of change and to accept the consequences.

Third, the agent may be called upon to become part of the force to routinize and institutionalize the change. The adoption of that role often comes at the loss of the role of "social prophet." Ironically, the one advocating change at step one may be the one who resists change by step seven. That, of course, is the Weberian side of the change experience. The process of rationalization/routinization captures the very one advocating social change in the "iron cage" of his own machinations. The greatest damnation of all, as Weber states it, is to become "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart."[49]

Filling Boxes of Denominational Change

Bennett has served his whole life within the framework of the Southern Baptist Convention. The Southern Baptist Convention is a denomination of gargantuan proportions. Thirty seven thousand, four hundred individual congregations contribute to the management and financial viability of thirteen agencies, including two mission organizations, the world's largest religious publishing house, seminaries scattered across the United States,

---

[49]Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1958), p. 182.

and a separate ministerial benefits/retirement agency.[50] The total membership of these churches is over 15,238,000.[51]

The churches in the SBC are still primarily located in less populated areas. In 1992, 86% of SBC churches were in towns with less than 50,000 residents or in rural areas.[52] SBC churches also stay true to their name. They are still most concentrated in the south.

Some Baptist historians have linked the rural/urban division with the worship styles that emerged in SBC history. Torbet sees the early division in worship style and emotional involvement in worship as connected to the convention's history. Referring to the Great Awakening, he writes,

> It became quite obvious that the more urban and conservatively cultured people did not favor the emotional excesses so freely created by the great stress which was placed by the revivalists upon sin and the need for an emotional upheaval type of conversion. The more rural and uneducated, on the other hand, just as strongly favored the warmth and zeal of the simple preachers who proclaimed the gospel of salvation from sin with homely illustrations and who preached in a loud and often monotonously hypnotic "holy tone" of more or less nasal quality accompanied by violent gestures. The uninhibited and emotional preaching of the revivalists

---

[50]1992 Southern Baptist Convention Handbook (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1992), p. 36.

[51]Ibid., p. 30.

[52]Ibid.

> appealed to their need for a heart-warming spiritual experience.[53]

These two traditions, the rural and the urban, have co-existed in the SBC since the founding of the denomination in 1845.

By the early 1960's, theologians, educators, sociologists of religion, and others were beginning to focus on the city in American life, and religion in the city more specifically. As urban areas began to thrive and then decline, the quality of religious life in urban areas became a prime interest. A landmark in the interest of religion in the urban setting is Harvey Cox's The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective.[54] But the SBC, with its predominantly rural and southern ties, seemed ill equipped to face the challenges presented by urban life.

At the time of the publication of The Secular City, George Willis Bennett was still a young professor at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, having joined the faculty in 1959, as Associate Professor of Christian Ethics. As will be documented in later chapters, Bennett demonstrated, while serving as a pastor in North Carolina, a willingness to be involved in civic issues that he felt had

---

[53]Robert G. Torbet, A History of the Baptists, 3d ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), p. 222.

[54]Harvey Cox, The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective (Toronto: Macmillin, 1965).

a religious dimension. The remainder of this dissertation will explore Bennett's application of a concern for the quality of life of persons living in urban areas to a pattern of social change for their living conditions.

But the pertinent question here remains "How did Bennett influence the Southern Baptist Convention's awareness of the needs of the people living in the city?" Following the outline of Smelser, I am suggesting the following hypothesis.

Dissatisfaction with the health of SBC churches in urban areas was felt by some persons with an interest in urban life. The disturbance was felt most acutely by churches in urban areas. Those churches, and the persons called in by these churches to help, experienced a dissatisfaction with the goal-achievement function of the SBC system. In other words, the stated goals, procedures, and resources of the SBC did not fill the needs of SBC churches struggling to survive and cope in urban areas. The denominational literature, ministry models, and agency agendas continued to focus on the rural South. Urban churches and pastors began to express their dissatisfaction with the curriculum and models coming out of the denominational headquarters in the South. Bennett writes,

> For years major Protestant denominations were so intent on building churches in the suburbs that little recognition was given to the needs which were beginning to emerge in the inner city. Indeed, the suburban growth was contributing to the problems downtown and in the older residential areas. Some people rejoiced so

> greatly over the new churches and growth that they scarcely noticed that many times they came about partly because thousands of Protestants had moved a few miles. If they had looked into the churches, they would have seen, in some instances, large brick church buildings with half-empty pews. Many of these churches are now struggling for their lives and others are beginning to adjust to the realities of their new situations.[55]

Stage two in Smelser's scheme is the eruption stage. This is evidenced in Southern Baptist life by the number of urban churches who have decided not to cope with their urban environment and either move to suburban areas or decide to die quietly, rather than adapt to the changing environment. Bennett writes,

> That the trend toward decline in all major areas of church life in inner city churches is quite certain. What is the explanation? Let it be noted that growth occurred between 1950 and 1955. Between 1955 and 1960 the great suburban trend got in full swing. Improved economic conditions made it possible for many families to move to better housing outside the inner city. Racial integration of the public schools frequently started in those located in the inner city, and many white families frankly admit that they moved into other school zones not yet threatened with the problem. Commercial development, expressways, and urban renewal took many low cost residential areas and further reduced the population. As noted earlier, the families that came to replace the out-migrants many times were Negro, other nonwhite, and Spanish-speaking families. These people did not find their way into our Baptist churches and indeed many times would not have been welcome.[56]

The system, at this point, fails to respond in a helpful way to the threat. Some individual elements of the system

---

[55]G. Willis Bennett, Confronting a Crisis: A Depth Study of Southern Baptist Churches in Metropolitan Transitional Areas (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1967), p. ii.

[56]Ibid., p. 21.

simply disappear at this stage, preferring disintegration to adaptation.

Stage three occurs when the forces of equilibrium take control and try to correct the problem using existing resources. In the case of the SBC, the value system that had worked perfectly for the rural farmer-preacher simply did not apply. Rurally-framed, revivalistic, conversionist methods seemed inadequate for urban crises. Conversion alone was not enough to save the city. Yet the value system of denominational loyalty still compelled urban pastors to look to their denomination for help. Writing of the struggle of these urban pastors, Bennett says,

> If all these were a people schooled in obediently being the servant church and willing to trust the results to God, their plight would be bearable. But when they have been trained to report results and to consider themselves less than successful if they have none to report, they then need to find a way to cope with their anxieties.[57]

Step four is the generation of new ideas. Bennett, and certainly a few others, began to respond to their perception of the struggle of urban congregations by "brain-storming" ways to help urban churches. Deeply influenced by Harvey Cox and Gibson Winter[58], his faculty address, "The Church in Secular Society," sent a clear message that his

---

[57]Ibid., pp. 22-23.

[58]Gibson Winter, The New Creation as Metropolis (New York: Macmillan, 1963).

life's work would focus on urban issues.[59] This step is the proliferation of new ideas, but no specific assignments are made at this stage. The system is still guided by its inherent value system. But the same internal forces that encourage the proliferation of new ideas begin to mold the value system to accommodate the new inventions.

Stage five is when the system moves to institutionalize the newest improvement, that is, adapt the changes into the system. In terms of the SBC, the institutionalization was demonstrated when Bennett was named the William Walker Brookes Professor of Church and Community and the new department of Church and Community Studies was formed. A significant amount of time will be spent later in the dissertation magnifying the innovations that Bennett brought to the study of urban ministry through this department.

The sixth stage is the riskiest because it holds the rewards and the punishments for successful or unsuccessful implementation of the innovations. Bennett's efforts were legitimated by the establishment of the department and the addition of church and community classes to the seminary's curriculum. Bennett was also rewarded with six other administrative promotions over a thirty year period, culminating with his service as Seminary Provost from 1987 until his retirement in 1991. From these administrative

---

[59]G. Willis Bennett, "The Church in Secular Society," Review and Expositor, 64 (Summer 1967), 297-308.

platforms, Bennett was able to institutionalize a concern for urban ministry through his writings, consultations with denominational agencies, placement of church and community graduates in key leadership roles in the SBC, and his authority to set and control the class offerings at the seminary.

The seventh stage is recognized when the changes are so routinized that they become part of the status quo. The concept of churches staying in urban areas and developing ministries to those areas is no longer new and radical. The Carver School of Church Social Work, on which Bennett's fingerprints can be found, graduates a significant number of students each year dedicated to the improvement of the human condition, with a special emphasis on urban ministry. The Church and Community department at Southern Seminary influences a significant number of Masters level students each year with the message that churches must respond to human needs. The department has also produced a number of Th.M., Ph.D., and D.Min. graduates. Denominational agencies have since published a number of resource materials for churches to use in planning their ministries. All of this says that the once radical concept of churches staying in densely populated urban areas to minister to human needs is now so institutionalized that it is a part of the curriculum of the seminary.

Resistance to Structural-Functional Analysis

As indicated above, structural-functional analysis of social change has its detractors. Lauer writes that "It seems clear that the approach taken in structural-functionalism, with its biological and mechanical modes of thought, tends to make the study of change awkward."[60] Indeed the anthropomorphic tendency of a systems perspective does put one in the dangerous position of ascribing mechanical or organic predictability to a social grouping. But human interaction sometimes seems monotonously repetitive. The controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention since 1979 provides an example. The SBC has experienced controversy since its founding. Each controversy has had its key figures, its threats and retaliations, and its systemic responses. There has been a certain "sameness" to the controversies, whether the issue is landmarkism, the anti-missionary movement, or anti-Masonry. While certain outcomes perhaps have not been predictable, the assurance that the boundaries will respond, that the sub-systems will bump and shift, and that the post-controversy system will evolve into a new form cannot be doubted. Like a human body, the system will respond with new growth or it will enter a state of entropy. Regardless

---

[60]Lauer, p. 96.

of the outcome, a structural-functional analysis insists that change is inevitable.

A second criticism has been that functionalism is a science of static conditions rather than change. Its detractors argue that functionalism cannot offer a theory of change because it is too concerned with studying equilibrium.[61] Smelser, and others, have answered that criticism with theories that trace the movement within systems of an impetus to change. Smelser's seven-stage change theory was an attempt to build upon the work of Parsons. Parsons gave a snapshot of a system standing still. Smelser offers a theory of a system in dynamic movement.

A third critique of the systems model of change is advanced by Gouldner and Cancian in separate works. They, and others, believe that functionalism has not yet proven the interdependence of sub-systems within systems. This argument is particularly devastating for if functionalism cannot demonstrate systemic connectionism, then the basis of Parson's definition of system falls.[62]

Smith writes that functionalists have taken two different paths of defense against these charges. The first is consolidation, the second is expansion. The

---

[61]Anthony D. Smith, The Concept of Social Change: A Critique of the Functionalist Theory of Social Change (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 3.

[62]Ibid., p. 6.

consolidation response concedes that functionalism cannot address change and contents its adherents with describing stability. Those in this predicament, according to Smith, have done a remarkable job of description of the social experience. He writes that they "develop further this crucial area of social life, and exercise self-denial as far as an overall theory of society is concerned."[63] They have made the decision to describe rather than predict.

Those in the expansionist camp, in which Smith contends the majority of functionalists fall, expand their vision into all of recorded human history. They have "rediscovered" history in an attempt to retrace it to prove the validity of their case. Smelser is a sublime example of one who returned to the 1840's to demonstrate the validity of his argument. Smith critiques the expansionists for going back in time rather than forward. They ignore, he believes, the social issues that need to be addressed for the advance of humane society.[64]

Modern sociology seems generally to have abandoned structural-functionalism in favor of the conflict theories, or Marxism. My own experience at the University of Louisville in 1989-90 was that the sociology department had become narrowly focused on marxism as the only viable sociological paradigm. It is the business and educational

---

[63]Ibid., p. 7.

[64]Ibid., p. 10.

development communities, in fact, which now are publishing the most material on systems analysis.[65]

The purpose of this study is basically historical. While the reader may at times sense a movement toward predictions, it is basically the story of how one man changed a system. Functionalism seems well-equipped to handle the task of providing descriptors and evaluative criteria for social change in the Southern Baptist Convention. The remainder of this dissertation will describe and evaluate Bennett as an agent of change in the SBC.

---

[65]Cp. Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, "Organizations and the System Concept" in Jay M. Shafritz and J. Steven Ott, eds., Classics of Organization Theory, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1987), p. 250-62; Leonard C. Silvern, ed., Number Three: Introduction to the Systems Approach (Englewood Cliff, New Jersey: Educational Technology Publications, 1988).

A new work utilizing functional analysis has received positive feedback from the academic community. See Joel Arthur Barker, Future Edge: Discovering the New Paradigms of Success (New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1992).

Chapter 3

"THY WILL BE DONE": A LIFE OF SERVICE TO BAPTISTS

The enormous contributions that George Willis Bennett gave to the character of his denomination were certainly not given in a vacuum. Several streams of influence converged in a single lifetime to endow that life with the strength and determination to bring change. One of the keys to understanding the impact of that life and the changes it wrought lies in identifying the influences that created it.

Bennett's Early Life at Home

George Willis Bennett was born in Candler, North Carolina, on July 29, 1919, to John C. and Allie Fisher Bennett.[1] Candler is a small, country town outside of Asheville. The first outdoor view of every morning in their home was Mt. Pisgah. His father was the pastor of the Hominy Baptist Church in Candler at the time of his birth.

---

[1]Who's Who in Religion, 4th ed., (Willmette, IL: Reed Reference Publishing Company, 1991-92), p. 36.

Bennett is the youngest of eight children and one of only two surviving to the present.[2]

His father accepted a church in Asheville while Bennett was still a youngster. But the family soon returned to Candler and the same pastorate his father had left. Bennett was converted and baptized by his father into the Hominy Church as a nine year old. Bennett fondly recalls visiting homes in the community with his father and the visits with his father in the car between homes. Those times with his father are treasured and vivid memories, even today. The senior Bennett was pastor there until his death when young Willis was eleven years old. The deaths of a very close older sister in August and his father's death in December of that same year made it a traumatic one for the whole family. These events were also his first exposure to death. Bennett recalls his dismay when he heard it said, "It's good that he's so young, he won't remember any of this." He says now, "I remember that and thinking how stupid I thought they were."

As a regular Sunday School and Vacation Bible School (VBS) attender, Bennett was exposed to a great deal of scripture memory. But a VBS motto became a lifelong motto for Bennett, "Thy will be done, no matter where it leads, no

---

[2]Statement by George Willis Bennett, retired provost of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author at Louisville, Kentucky, on March 11, 1993.

matter what it costs." Bennett has tried to keep that motto all of his life. He says, "I must be quick to confess I haven't always lived up to it, either in knowing the will of God or of doing it. But consciously I have been aware of wanting to (follow the will of God)."

After the death of his father, Bennett encountered for the first time a pastor who was not his father, Rev. Nane Starnes. The church decided to build a parsonage for the new pastor near his home. Starnes, a single man who had just graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, became a significant influence in Bennett's life, starting in his early teen years. Starnes baptized the young Caroline Dillard (the future Mrs. Bennett) after her family moved to Candler and united with the church, ordained Bennett to the ministry, and became a significant mentor for Bennett's life. The relationship continued even after Starnes accepted a larger pastorate in Asheville. Starnes later preached revivals at five different churches where Bennett was pastor. Starnes is now in his nineties and living in a nursing home in Asheville. Bennett still maintains contact with Starnes when he visits in the area.

As the youngest child, Bennett was the last one left at home. Since his father had died while Bennett was still in childhood, he became the primary caregiver for his mother. He learned to manage a household, contribute to the

family income, and be responsible for household chores. High school extra-curricular activities were not an option because of his work at home. Working the family farm, he sold eggs, milk and butter, livestock, potatoes, and apples to supplement the family income. Cleaning out the barn and the chicken house fell to Bennett as the only man left in the family.

Bennett remembers his mother as a "giving" person. She adopted helping others as a lifestyle. She was intelligent and sensitive. He still recalls the pain of leaving her at home alone when he left for college. His mother lived to be eighty-two years old, including over thirty years after the death of her husband. He remembers her as a strong woman who held the family together. Mrs. Bennett insisted that her children receive a formal education, and indeed every one of her children completed degrees at Mars Hill College. Several of the children went on to senior college. While Bennett was the only minister in the family, all five of his sisters became school teachers.

Educational Influences

Bennett was educated through high school in Candler. From Candler, he moved to Mars Hill Junior College. After a two year course of study at Mars Hill, he completed his college education at Wake Forest University in 1941, receiving the A.B. degree. Bennett majored in English at

Wake Forest and carried a double minor in Religion and Psychology/Sociology.

The most significant professor for Bennett at Wake Forest was Olin T. Binkley, a professor of religion and philosophy. Binkley later left Wake Forest to assume a professorship at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he became Bennett's major professor for his doctoral work. Binkley is credited by Bennett with sensitizing him to the needs of a hurting world. Binkley taught "Christian Sociology" with a strong emphasis on justice issues. He is remembered by Bennett as a sensitive, compassionate person who instilled those same values in his students.

Marriage to Miss Dillard

Caroline Dillard moved with her family to Candler in 1935, prior to Bennett's senior year in high school. Her father was the superintendent of the schools. The school superintendent and the pastor of the church were the key figures in the community, so it was natural that their children would meet. He remembers meeting Miss Dillard in the summer before his senior year in high school. She recalls the first time she saw Bennett. She was standing in her father's office at the school and looked through the window into the hall to see him "sauntering down the hall, his hair all slicked back like an onion . . . and his blue

eyes and blond hair."[3] Their first dates were on Sunday nights at the Baptist Training Union (BTU). Though her mother would not allow them to date, Bennett was allowed to walk Miss Dillard home after church. She laughs to remember that if Bennett stayed too late at her house, her father would pound his shoe on the floor in his upstairs bedroom and "out the door Willis would fly."[4]

Bennett stayed out of school for a year after high school to work for college expenses, which put Bennett and Miss Dillard on the same college track. He worked the midnight shift at the local rayon factory and on Saturdays, they rode the train into Asheville to the "picture show." Bennett and Miss Dillard would flag the train down in Candler, deboard in Asheville, take the bus into town, eat lunch at the drug store counter, and enjoy an afternoon with Fred and Ginger.[5]

Although they went to different colleges the next year (she to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro), they courted "off and on" throughout college. They were engaged the year after college graduation and were married in June, 1942. In that year, Mrs. Bennett worked at a bank and Bennett served as the pastor of the Chunn's Cove

---

[3]Statement by Caroline Bennett, wife of G. W. Bennett, in an interview with the author at Louisville, Kentucky, April 13, 1993.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Interview with C. Bennett.

Baptist Church outside Asheville (1941-42). The Bennetts moved to the Oteen Baptist Church in 1942, where he served as pastor for two years before entering the seminary in Louisville.

The Call to Ministry and Bennett's Preparation

The call to vocational ministry came to Bennett in his freshman year at Mars Hill. He remembers writing his mother and his home church about his decision. He laughs when he says that "Nobody was surprised. I think they had assumed that before I did." His call to ministry was an inner desire that was very real to him and from which he could not be freed. His struggle, he says, was to confirm his call. Since he desired to be a minister from childhood and follow in his father's and Starnes' footsteps, he felt the need to confirm that call. He became convinced of the call to ministry at Mars Hill College, preaching on the weekends in the small churches around North Carolina. Bennett assumed, following the only ministry models he had known, that his life's work would be in the pastorate.

Two experiences exposed Bennett to public speaking as an art form. High school oratorical societies encouraged students to write their own orations and then present them to the society. Bennett discovered that he loved public speaking and thrived in the context of the oratorical society. Mars Hill offered few on-campus activities, so Bennett and his colleagues formed two literary societies to plan and

present programs by students. The annual competition between the societies was a campus highlight. Later, at Wake Forest, he was named a Senior Orator and spoke at his graduation commencement. Bennett was on the debate team at Mars Hill and at Wake Forest for all of his college years. Bennett credits the debate experience with being a major influence on his willingness and skill in public speaking.

The other experience that Bennett credits with his early interest in public speaking was the Baptist Training Union (BTU, earlier known as the BYPU, Baptist Young People's Union) in his home church. "Giving parts" was an event to which he looked forward and to which he gave a great deal of time in preparation. He recalls the leader's insistence on not using the quarterly or any notes, a skill he developed that later proved to be valuable.

In his second year of the pastorate at Oteen, the Bennetts decided to come to the seminary to continue his training. Although his mentor, Starnes, was a graduate of Southwestern Seminary, Bennett decided to follow his college professor, Binkley, to Southern in Louisville. In fact, he says that Wake Forest was a feeder school for Southern in those days and Southern was more "intellectually compatible" with Wake Forest. Another draw to Southern were his college classmates, including Wayne Oates, Henlee Barnette, and Nolan Howington. His college roommate, J. W. Angel, was also at Southern as a student. He later returned to Wake

Forest to teach until his retirement. Since he had been out of college for three years before he started seminary, his college acquaintances were in their first year of graduate programs at Southern.

Bennett's recollection of the years between college and seminary are positive ones. In those years he married, paid off college debts, and gained important experience as a pastor. The difficult shift, for him, was giving up the status of a pastor to assume the role of a student.

During their first week in Louisville, both of the Bennetts found employment. Mrs. Bennett became the secretary to the president of the Federal Reserve Bank and Bennett worked as a clerk in the Men's and Boy's departments of Stewart Dry Goods. These, of course, were the years of the Second World War so he could work as many hours as he needed. The seminary held classes six days a week, so the company was willing to work around his class schedule.

Bennett was awarded the B.D. degree in 1947. Their first child, Susanne, was born a month before the completion of that degree. Mrs. Bennett desired to be home with their daughter through the day, so she became the manuscript typist for Gaines S. Dobbins. Bennett picked up the manuscripts from Dobbins and returned them to him typed. Bennett recalls that Dobbins "produced books as rapidly as he could turn them out and she typed all of them." She was also active at the seminary in those years as president of

the seminary wives' Womans' Missionary Union (WMU) group. That role gave her the opportunity to become well acquainted with Mrs. Ellis Fuller, wife of the seminary's president and the WMU sponsor.[6] Mrs. Bennett recalls many fun times at the seminary playing cards with her first cousin, Badgett Dillard, while Bennett studied. The seminary years when Bennett was a student were very happy ones for Mrs. Bennett. She recalls a long list of seminary friends that they have kept up with through the years.

Bennett sensed a definite call to ministry, but did Mrs. Bennett share that call? Mrs. Bennett answers that question with the memory of a painful experience for her. In her parents' home, Mrs. Bennett was exposed to many parties with lots of food and usually dancing. She was raised to enjoy friends and people. But the day Bennett was ordained, there was a reception in Bennett's home church following the service. The hall was full of people who were congratulating the new minister and one-by-one they approached the couple to express their best wishes. Mrs. Bennett recalls that

> this old woman came up to him and said, "Well, Willis we are so proud of you." Then she looked right at me and she said to me, "But you're gonna' have to give up your wicked ways." It just crushed me.[7]

---

[6]Interview with C. Bennett.

[7]Ibid.

Bennett's mother consoled the young minister's wife with the assurance that "You'll make Willis a good wife. Just don't think anything about that." Mrs. Bennett saw her calling as to be a good wife to him, whether he was a preacher, a banker, or a teacher. Whatever he wanted to do, she was determined to share.[8]

The Master of Theology (Th.M.) was a prerequisite for the Doctor of Theology (Th.D.). Bennett was awarded the Th.M. in 1948 and he immediately entered the Th.D. program. Jane was born in 1950, the last year that Bennett was in residence with his graduate work at the seminary. In 1950, Bennett returned to North Carolina to serve the Olive Chapel Baptist Church of Apex, North Carolina as pastor. Apex is a small Appalachian community twenty miles from Raleigh, twenty miles from Durham, and twenty-three miles from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He completed his dissertation out of the Duke University library, twenty miles from the church field. Coincidentally, Binkley moved to Southeastern Seminary as president at about the same time. The faculty at Southern encouraged Binkley to continue his supervision of Bennett's graduate work, which he did.

The call to Olive Chapel Church came on the recommendation of Binkley. Daughter number three, Mary Leslie, was born in 1953, while Bennett was the pastor there.

---

[8]Ibid.

Bennett still recalls the five years at Olive Chapel as some of the most interesting and productive years of his life.

Olive Chapel Baptist Church, 1950-55

Olive Chapel was already a well-known church before Bennett arrived. The church, says Bennett, was recognized as one of the greatest rural churches in the nation. Christian Century had selected the church as one of the twelve "Great Churches of America," which had garnered the church a great deal of attention.[9] Incidentally, Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, was also selected as one of the churches. Life Magazine contacted Bennett in his first month as the pastor to write a feature article on the church. He recalls that two Life Magazine photographers resided in the church and their home for a photo shoot that appeared in a 1950's issue. That same year, the Voice of America radio broadcast did a feature program on Olive Chapel. Bennett recalls that the church was thrilled to learn that one of their members serving the military in Germany heard that broadcast.[10]

Olive Chapel Baptist Church stood in open country twenty miles southwest of Raleigh, North Carolina, in 1950. Its members were mostly "tillers of small farms on the

---

[9]"Great Churches of America," The Christian Century, LXVII: 31 (August 2, 1950), pp. 913-919.

[10]Interview with G. W. Bennett, March 11, 1993.

rolling face of the Piedmont hills."[11] Mrs. Bennett recalls the day that they moved into the parsonage and the entire church met them to greet the young family. The house seemed huge to a family accustomed to student accommodations. A prime example of how this church helped the Bennetts was when the decision was made to build a new parsonage on the site of the old one. The old house was to be moved to a different part of the lot by a house moving company. Mrs. Bennett was assured that the house could be moved and they could continue to live in it until the new one was ready. She assumed that meant they moved the house just as it stood. When the movers came, she remembers the moving men saying, "Well lady, you have to take everything off of the walls and pack away anything that could break." She says that she burst out in tears, "Willis, what are we going to do?" But calls were made around the church and soon the house was full of people packing items away. The house was moved that very day.[12]

Organized around 1850, the church was named after a prominent family in the area. The first worshippers started and maintained a school for their children and practiced a rugged frontier self-discipline. Thus, very early the church worked to transform a "rough, illiterate population of pioneers into a well behaved and well educated

---

[11]"Great Churches," p. 914.

[12]Interview with C. Bennett.

community."[13] Consequently, by 1910, the church was recognized by the SBC as among its outstanding churches. According to The Christian Century, in 1920, the pastor achieved national acclaim.

The Christian Century described the pride of the church members in their property like this:

> Members spend a considerable amount of time keeping their nine-acre church center in condition for maximum service. At the heart of the landscaped acres, on high land beside the curving road, stands the stately brick church, its white pillars accenting a Georgian design. To the southeast lies the church cemetery, in which many are buried whose voices blended in the singing schools of an earlier day. Across the road to the east are an older cemetery and a large community house equipped for church dinners, socials, games, and all the group affairs of a modern farm neighborhood. North of the church stands the eight-room parsonage, surrounded by trees and a garden. In a meadow to the west is the church athletic field, from which the shouts of neighborhood ball games are often heard. A neat house of the sexton completes the center.[14]

The church had 555 members in 1950 when Bennett was called to the pastorate. The Sunday School averaged 224 attenders. What truly distinguished Olive Chapel from its myriad rural sister churches was not what happened on Sunday morning, but what happened through the week. The Brotherhood and the Woman's Missionary Union met the first Sunday night of each month, with fifty men and 115 women participating. The Baptist Training Union drew nearly a hundred people each week. Vacation Bible Schools enrolled

---

[13]"Great Churches," p. 913.

[14]Ibid.

120 children each summer; two choirs and twenty-five committees also filled member's time. Adding in trips for young people and adults to denominational events, conferences, and socials made a full calendar. Additionally, gatherings on soil conservation, 4-H Club meetings, the Grange, or home demonstration clubs to improve home and farm living kept the congregation active. The financial standing of the congregation in 1950 was considered sound. The contributions totaled $13,400, of which $4000-5000 went to missions support. The church sent its pastor to Europe in 1947, where he visited rural churches in nine countries and attended the Baptist World Alliance. The congregation presented a new automobile to the pastor and a grand piano to the choir director in 1949-50.[15] The next year the congregation presented a new black and silver 1951 Chevrolet to the Bennetts. Mrs. Bennett recalls that the first Christmas in the new parsonage, two deacons delivered two brand new television sets to the Bennetts' home. Apparently the deacons had misunderstood which one was to pick up the new television as a gift from the deacons and Mrs. Bennett was able to choose which one to keep. This was indeed a generous church and it is easy to see why the Bennetts still express so much appreciation for the years at Olive Chapel.[16]

---

[15]Ibid., p. 915.

[16]Interview with C. Bennett.

Garland Hendricks, pastor of Olive Chapel prior to Bennett, preached frequently on the need for soil conservation and the stewardship of creation. He advocated cooperation among farmers rather than competition, contour plowing, terracing, check dams, soil testing, scientific fertilizing, and diversification of crops. He was chairman of the Apex school board and the rural church committee of the North Carolina Baptist Convention. He was a frequent writer for the Greensboro newspaper and a friend of Governor W. Kerr Scott. He testified on behalf of the Grange in front of the North Carolina legislature. Hendricks was named "Rural Minister of the Year" by the Progressive Farmer in 1949. He also served as a member of the Social Service Committee of the SBC and the state convention's executive board. The Christian Century asks a pertinent question, "Is this church progressive because of its pastor or vice versa?" It responds that "The fact is that church and pastor are suited to each other, speak the same language, serve the same high purposes."[17]

When Bennett became pastor of Olive Chapel, he also became a key player in the community dynamics. He says of Olive Chapel, "That's where I became committed to church and community. I saw that if you wanted to have a strong church, you had to have a strong community." He recognizes

---

[17]"Great Churches," Christian Century, p. 915.

that he inherited that philosophy from the church's leadership and he committed himself to perpetuate it.[18]

Bennett led the church to work with the U.S. Forestry service, the Wildlife Service, and the Soil Conservation Service. As the pastor, Bennett invited these agencies to come into the community to assist the landowners in improving the quality of their livelihood. The farmers learned how to thin their forests to get maximum timber growth, to plan ahead for cutting, to plant seedlings to restore the forests, to fertilize their farm ponds for maximum fish growth, to provide improved food products, and to learn to strip-crop and irrigate. The church led the way for the local farmers to improve the overall quality of their lives. Church grounds and facilities were full of tractor and plow demonstrations, workshops, and conferences. Bennett encountered some resistance from members who did not see the connection of the church to these issues. In fact, some farmers opposed the use of irrigation on theological bases. He describes their position as "If God wants our fields watered, he will water them." Bennett supported the work of these agencies from the pulpit and from his position as a community leader. He says now, "I was an environmentalist preacher in the days before it was popular." By the time he left this pastorate, nearly all of the farms were using irrigation.

---

[18]Interview with G. W. Bennett, March 11, 1993.

Bennett's first published sermon was "The Good Earth and Man's Responsibility" in The Progressive Farmer. He preached that sermon during Soil Conservation week. A person in the congregation submitted the sermon and it was published. In the years that followed, The Progressive Farmer published a number of his writings.

He also became involved in politics. He became a vocal advocate of a gubernatorial candidate named Scott who promised to get North Carolina's roads paved. To give incentive to that campaign, Bennett deliberately took his car onto a muddy road to visit a parishioner. He knew before he went that he would get stuck. Not coincidentally, a farmer with a tractor was standing by to pull him out of the mud, and also not coincidentally, a photographer was also standing by. The photograph in the Raleigh News and Observer, the capital's leading paper, demonstrated that it was impossible for the minister or the doctor to call on the people who lived on this road in certain times of the year. That year, Governor Scott became a strong ally to the church and a personal friend to Bennett. The church's picture appeared in the paper another time when the governor came to eat barbecue with the congregation.

Although Bennett never held an elected office, he was appointed to the district Board of Education which oversaw both the white and black schools of the district. His tenure coincided with the 1954 Supreme Court decision to

integrate the public schools. While the actual integration came later, the board had to provide equal educational opportunities to all students. Bennett is proud of the fact that when integration did come, the black schools were as fine as the white schools. The superintendent became a close personal friend and professional ally. Bennett's doctorate became an asset as it gained the respect of the superintendent and allowed Bennett to influence the decisions of the district. Their relationship continues even to the present time.

The proximity of Apex to several colleges meant that most of the town's youth attended college as commuters. Olive Chapel had a long history of a commitment to higher education. Bennett perpetuated that legacy. Consequently, members of the congregation gave leadership at some of the highest levels of civic influence. For example, the chairman of deacons under Bennett's pastorate served on the advisory committee of the United States Department of Agriculture under President Eisenhower. He was a frequent traveler to Washington to advise the Secretary and the President on rural issues. Although this was a rural, open country area, the church was strong and influential.

Bennett was also exposed to the North Carolina state Baptist convention during these years. He became the writer for the Sunday School lesson commentaries in The Biblical Recorder, the state Baptist newspaper and was chairman of

the Religious Liberty Committee of the state convention. There he was forced to deal with critical social issues and he became involved with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the SBC religious liberty lobby in Washington, D.C.

When the Bennetts left the church, they were presented with a silver tea service that they still treasure. Their decision to move was prompted by a call from a larger church in a small town. The personal challenges seemed greater for the young pastor in a larger community.[19]

Olive Chapel, Bennett is convinced, caused Southern Seminary to turn to him when a vacancy occurred on the campus. Bennett was frequently in the state and denominational newspapers for his work at the church. It was at Olive Chapel that Bennett honed his skills in leading a church into community involvement. When the seminary looked for a graduate to teach in the church and community field, Bennett was one who had been actually doing this work in a local church.

First Baptist Church, Red Springs, North Carolina, 1955-59

Bennett moved his family to the First Baptist Church of Red Springs, North Carolina, in 1955. Red Springs is a college town in the eastern part of the state. He repeated

---

[19]Interview with C. Bennett.

his involvement with the community at Red Springs by becoming active on the school board and in civic affairs. Bennett was known mostly for his work with the relocation of Flora McDonald College, a Presbyterian school. After the college decided to leave the town, the vacated campus left many challenges for the community. The property could easily have slipped into disuse. Bennett gave leadership to a successful effort to bring a private high school to that campus.

One of his two most significant contributions to the area was the development of a social service association, a collaboration of four churches in a common benevolent fund. The fund benefitted transients and local people in need. Each of the churches elected a representative to the board and each church contributed to the work. This was Bennett's first exposure to a cooperative effort, a format that would later become a trademark of his work. That organization still serves the community nearly forty years later.

The other contribution of Bennett was the organization of a cooperative canning factory that encouraged farmers to grow cashcrops to sell on the market. The chief crop of tobacco was waning in popularity for the southern farmer and new forms of income were needed. Bennett and others encouraged farmers to grow onions and cucumbers that would be canned into pickles. The factory does not continue to operate.

Bennett's Move to the Seminary

Nine years after leaving the seminary as a graduate student, Bennett was invited in 1959 to return as a professor of Christian ethics and to develop electives in church and community. Mrs. Bennett recalls her anxiety about returning to the seminary. The reduced salary meant some changes in the family arrangements so that she would have to work outside their home. One of their closest friends had been dismissed in the faculty-administration controversy the previous year. And Mrs. Bennett remembers feeling intimidated by the other faculty wives. She soon found a position with Highland Baptist Church as the pastor's secretary which made her the only faculty wife to be working outside her home.[20]

The seminary's interest in the church and community field had been whetted by Henlee Barnette and J. D. Weatherspoon. Weatherspoon was a preaching professor who also taught "Christian Sociology." Bennett recalls that the seminary faculty's concept of church and community sprang from the model of Union Seminary in New York City. Bennett's first task was to teach the required ethics courses; after that, he was free to develop any elective courses that he chose.[21]

---

[20]Ibid.

[21]Interview with G. W. Bennett, March 23, 1993.

Bennett was convinced that students, in addition to the traditional theological curriculum, needed special preparation to serve in communities to which they would be called. Since two-thirds of all students went to rural churches, he developed a specialized course on rural life. But he also developed a specialized course for urban churches. A third basic church and community course was developed to teach students to analyze their community for themselves. Field trips became a regular part of the course requirements.

Bennett also served during his seminary years as interim pastor of all kinds of urban churches. He fondly recalls two interim pastorates at the Highland Baptist Church in Louisville. At the request of Wayne Dehoney, pastor of the Walnut Street Baptist Church, a central city church in Louisville, Bennett served for five years as a volunteer staff person (1968-73). His task was to develop a social ministries program. He credits this role with his best exposure to life in a large downtown church. Bennett feels that his years at Walnut Street taught him a great deal about the ministry of an urban church in a transitional neighborhood. He learned about the necessity of the urban church's cooperation area agencies to provide the social welfare needs of the community residents.

Bennett learned an important principle in urban ministry, that is, the need to structure a ministry so that

it would not become paternalistic, thereby fostering dependency. He cites a topic given to him for an address to the volunteers, "How to Help without Hurting." He felt that the topic was very creative and demonstrated a great deal of insight from the church into the nature of its ministry.

The development of the social welfare ministry at Walnut Street continued under Bennett's leadership until Bob Nowlin, a full-time staff minister was called. That ministry is still vital to the community and valued by the church.

The Influence of Social Work

Concurrent with Bennett's service in urban churches, the seminary's interest in the field of social work was increasing. Duke McCall, president of the seminary, asked Bennett to consider giving leadership to the social work courses, since so much of the field of church and community and social work overlapped. Bennett used his first sabbatical from teaching to complete a degree at the Kent School of Social Work at the University of Louisville. The Master of Science in Social Work (M.S.S.W.) was awarded to Bennett in 1964.

Bennett returned to the campus in the Fall of 1964. The syllabi for the first eleven courses in the social work school at Southern Seminary were written by Bennett. His role was to recruit teachers, many of them adjunct professors from the University of Louisville. Walter Delamarter

was then hired to give leadership to the social work program and Bennett returned to a focus on church and community courses. This return to the church and community focus was a deliberate decision. If he had stayed with the social work courses, he would have been a faculty member of the School of Religious Education at Southern. He felt that he would have a greater impact on the future pastors studying in the School of Theology by teaching church and community classes.

Operation Partnership, Inc.

McCall approached Bennett in 1968 to ask him to pioneer another new program. V. V. Cooke, a Louisville philanthropist and Baptist layman, offered an undesignated sum of money to a summer program to help the people who lived in the "deprived areas of the city." Cooke stipulated that the seminary would provide the leadership for the program. Bennett had forty-eight hours to design the program and prepare his presentation to Cooke. He framed a program called "Operation Partnership, Incorporated." Cooke approved of the idea and Bennett gave volunteer leadership to the program for the summer. Bennett recalls that ten to twelve students were recruited for summer placement; most of them were Ph.D. students in Church and Community or Christian Ethics. Three African-American students from the University of Louisville Kent School were added to give the program diverse leadership.

The program worked all summer to provide services to youth, senior citizens, the unemployed, and others. It leased a bus for frequent outings, including Redbirds baseball games, Belle of Louisville rides, and many other events. The program also had an educational component. It encouraged urban dwellers to complete their high school diplomas through the General Equivalency Diploma program (GED). Assistance was also provided to African-Americans preparing for the Civil Service Examination to become Louisville police officers. C. Welton Gaddy tutored these men to prepare for the exam. Bennett recalls that he secured unprecedented permission to screen the exam to help the tutor prepare his students. He laughs when he recalls that he was allowed only to scan the test visually then to recall the contents to the tutor.

The students involved in that program responded with changed perspectives and fresh insights into urban life. Bennett recalls that Paul Turner was the bus driver. He later became a professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. Gaddy became a popular Baptist preacher now living in Macon, Georgia.[22]

That summer's experience exposed Bennett to the class structures that are a part of urban life. The vola-

---

[22]C. Welton Gaddy, "Preaching and Social Change" in Shooting the Rapids: Effective Ministry in a Changing World, ed. Fred W. Andrea (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990), pp. 39-53.

tility of the nation that summer opened many eyes to the needs of the urban poor. Bennett also was reminded of the need for agencies to cooperate in social ministries. He discovered that many agencies are willing to help, but need direction from a leader to initiate the change.[23]

The Association of Christian Training and Service

In 1966, Bennett was invited by Arthur Rutledge, Executive Secretary of the Home Mission Board (HMB) to represent the HMB at a meeting in Memphis, Tennessee. A number of denominations had decided to consider forming an organization in the southeastern United States for urban research and training. Bennett went to that meeting representing the Southern Baptist Convention. Bennett recalls that nine denominations were gathered there, including Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists, United Church of Christ, Episcopalians, Catholics, and African-American denominations.[24]

Bennett says that "They were so glad to have a Southern Baptist present at an ecumenical function, where Baptists were not prone to go, that they named me chairman of the group." He presided over the group throughout the day. At the end of the day, the group appointed a committee to draft a constitution, proposed bylaws, and a budget to

---

[23]Interview with G. W. Bennett, March 23, 1993.

[24]Ibid.

serve the group. Again the group turned to Bennett as chairperson.

Bennett flew back and forth to Memphis many Friday nights to meet with the planning group. The group was constituted as the Association of Christian Training and Service (ACTS). Rutledge had privately agreed with Bennett that if the bylaws were written in such a way as to be acceptable to Southern Baptists, then the HMB would be willing to contribute $35,000 to the group. That would have been the largest single contribution from any of the groups.

Rutledge, Bennett remembers, was pleased with the outcome and with great enthusiasm presented the project to a HMB meeting at Glorieta, New Mexico. Bennett was also at Glorieta at that time to present a conference on urban work. Bennett recalls that the board meeting preceded the conference. When he arrived at Glorieta, he was met by Rutledge with the news that the board of trustees would not approve of the expenditure. Bennett recalls Rutledge as saying that it was "too ecumenical for them."

When Bennett returned to the ACTS meeting, he was prepared to withdraw from the group since he could not represent the SBC. ACTS responded by designating Bennett as an "at-large" member and he continued to chair the group. ACTS called an executive director, a researcher, and two others to establish an office in Memphis. The office is now in Nashville. Bennett served as chairperson for two more

years. When Bennett moved to the role of Dean at the seminary in 1983, Larry McSwain was elected to the board. McSwain hosted a consultation on the future of ACTS on the Southern Seminary campus in 1992. That event coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the organization.

Baptists Finally Confront a Crisis

The Southern Baptist Convention, since its founding in 1845, has had a keen interest in the cities. Originally dubbed "City Missions," the first urban mission efforts were in New Orleans in 1845, under the direction of the Board of Domestic Missions. Over the next fifteen years, prior to the war, the work spread to thirty cities, including Montgomery, Richmond, Augusta, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz. The work assisted churches financially and with personnel to conduct their work. The Civil War, however, collapsed these mission efforts.[25]

Very little is recorded of city missions until 1941, when the HMB supported urban missions work in Houston, TX. By 1943, work was being supported in twenty-one different sites. To this point, support agreements were between the local association and the HMB. On January 1, 1951, the mission departments of state conventions were made the

---

[25]Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, vol. 1 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958), pp. 291-92.

intermediary. This arrangement is still operative today. Supervision of HMB supported programs now lies in the hands of state convention missions directors.[26]

The Home Mission Board, SBC, engaged Bennett in the summer of 1965 to conduct a study of Baptist Churches in twenty cities in eighteen different states. Primary leadership at the Home Mission Board for the study was provided by Arthur Rutledge, Executive Secretary of the HMB, Harold Bennett of the Urban Missions Department and Lloyd Corder of the Language Missions Department. Oscar Romo, an associate in the Language Missions Department, Paul Adkins and Howard Brantley of the Social Ministries Department, and the entire Evangelism Department were early supporters of the study. Bennett filled the summer with interviews with pastors, mayors, newspaper publishers, and others with an interest in urban life. The result of that study was Confronting a Crisis: A Depth Study of Southern Baptist Churches in Metropolitan Transitional Areas.[27]

What caused the HMB to be concerned about urban America? Certainly the social justice issues had taken the forefront of American political life in the mid-1960's. But Bennett and others are convinced that the impetus to change did not come from a newly discovered social conscience, but

---

[26]Ibid.

[27]G. Willis Bennett, Confronting a Crisis: A Depth Study of Southern Baptist Churches in Metropolitan Transitional Areas (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1967).

from the fear of numerical decline. Bennett says, "I don't think they (the HMB) were that much concerned with social justice issues; they were concerned about declining churches." Jere Allen, former director of the Metropolitan Missions Department, HMB, affirms that same sentiment: "I believe for us, it was the demise of the local church itself" that drove the concern for urban evangelism. He continues to say "I believe that the social issues were impacting the churches . . . especially the rural people moving to the cities." Allen contends that when the rural residents moved into the cities, for some reason, they left their church commitment behind. The urban churches, and thus the convention, experienced numerical and financial decline. This was the pain that drove the change, not the burden of a dissatisfied social conscience.[28] Larry Rose, former director of the Center for Urban Church Studies also affirmed the convention's attention to urban evangelism as an attempt to reclaim the strength in the cities.[29]

But why was Bennett selected to conduct the study? Bullard relates some background material to explain why the SBC turned to Bennett. "The 1960s shook some people alive," he says. The programs of the 1950s were no longer working.

---

[28]Statement by Jere Allen, Executive Director of the Washington, D. C., Metropolitan Baptist Convention, in a telephone interview with the author on March 11, 1993.

[29]Statement by Larry Rose, Executive Director of the Tarrant County Baptist Association of Fort Worth, Texas, in a telephone interview with the author on March 12, 1993.

The HMB was looking for a sense of direction. Rutledge, as a state missions director in Texas in the 1950s, noticed that the HMB, the state convention, and the local associations were all trying to do the same programs in urban ministry. All three entities had appointed urban missionaries to serve in Houston with no relationship between them. The 1958 SBC meeting in Louisville mandated to the agencies to build a structure that would eliminate the duplication. Since Rutledge had been a prime mover in making the changes, he was asked to come to the HMB in 1959 to work toward a solution.[30]

The retirement of Courts Redford as executive director of the HMB and the election of Rutledge to that post in 1964 provided an opportunity for new visions and directions. Already at the HMB were several staff members with a predisposition toward Southern Seminary. Although Bennett had become known as a researcher in the five years he had been at Southern, he still was thought to have a rural orientation. Rutledge and the HMB decided to turn to Bennett trusting that he was able to make the transition to an urban research program.[31]

Bennett documented what most everyone had come to realize, that is, that Southern Baptists were losing

---

[30]Statement by George Bullard, Director of the Missions Department, South Carolina Baptist Convention, in a telephone interview with the author on April 7, 1993.

[31]Ibid.

numerical ground in the urbanized areas of America. His research, however, indicated that the pastors themselves were not directly responsible for the decline. Churches experienced numerical decline because they were failing to respond to the needs of the cities in which they were located. It became increasingly clear that pastors were not being equipped to cope with the changes in the urban communities and the convention did not have support materials available to help them. Bennett says that he

> tried to show that evangelization was not going to be through mass urban evangelistic efforts, that is big campaigns, revivals, but of necessity of involvement with people in helping address the needs that they faced . . . then they would become more interested in the church.[32]

Bullard replicated Bennett's study for a Th.M. thesis in 1977. He discovered that in the ten years following Bennett's study the cities he studied reported even greater crises of decline. Bullard is convinced that Bennett accurately predicted the decline that continued even after the Crisis study.[33]

Bennett was seen as an advocate for and the friend of urban pastors in transitional communities. In the final chapter of the book, Bennett calls for a denominational response to the needs of these pastors, including but not limited to urban training centers, new networks of

---

[32]Interview with G. W. Bennett, March 23, 1993.

[33]Interview with Bullard, April 7, 1993.

cooperation, and direct assistance to churches in transitional neighborhoods. Direct beneficiaries of the study were the Urban Training Cooperative (UTC), Project: Assistance for Churches in Transitional Communities (PACT), and the Center for Urban Church Studies. Bennett recalls a meeting with the eleven department heads of the HMB and the Executive Secretary Rutledge where

> most of them liked my findings, but a couple of them resisted them because they were contrary to their assumptions. They wanted me to modify my findings and I said "No, I think I've done an objective study and I will write my findings the way I've seen them."[34]

Not coincidentally, the work of those resistant departments was modified to fit the findings of the research. After that, Bennett reflects, those most resistant became some of the most progressive advocates for churches in transitional areas.

This ground-breaking study thrust Bennett into the limelight in the SBC. He became a frequent conference speaker at the Baptist conference centers. He led numerous staff retreats for urban strategy agencies. Confronting a Crisis was used repeatedly in planning state convention mission budgets. Bennett's terminology from the book was adopted by a number of planning agencies, including the Christian Social Ministries department at the HMB. Bennett's philosophy of cooperative strategy was applied to work at the various agencies. Bennett says of the HMB, "I

---

[34]Interview with G. W. Bennett, March 23, 1993.

always kept appealing to the Home Mission Board, 'Don't let any one department defend its right to work with a church, because the church needs to be working with all your departments.'"[35]

The Urban Training Cooperative

Bennett, writing in the final chapter of Confronting a Crisis, says

> It is time the denomination considered establishing an urban church institute or training center. Such a center, located in some large metropolitan area, could be the base for short term courses of study . . . . It is possible that this could become a mobile training center remaining in one location long enough for interested persons throughout the region to attend, and then being moved to a new section of the country.[36]

Bennett suggested that the HMB take the lead to organize this training effort.

Three years later, in October, 1969, the Department of Metropolitan Missions of the HMB issued an invitation to all six seminaries and a representative of the other SBC agencies to meet in January, 1970, in Atlanta, to brainstorm the possibilities. At the Atlanta meeting, the representatives decided to meet again in October in Louisville for a pilot training event. The staff of the Association for Christian Training and Service (ACTS) was enlisted to provide the structure for the event. Ironically, George

---

[35]Ibid.

[36]Bennett, Confronting a Crisis, p. 102.

Torney, one of Bennett's first graduate students, served as the HMB staff coordinator.[37]

The attenders of the October meeting experienced a "mini-plunge into the ghetto, dialogue with drug users and racial minorities," and a simulation experience. The group struggled with indecision over the next step. A member of the group was drafted to write to Rutledge at the HMB asking for an official planning meeting in May, 1971. The date was agreed to by Rutledge and Russell Bennett, an associate at the HMB, was designated the staff planner.

On May 31, 1971, nineteen persons met in St. Louis prior to the annual SBC meeting. That conference defined the parameters of what would become the Urban Training Cooperative, or UTC. The conference defined "urban training" as

> an ongoing process to provide (1) sociological awareness to urban needs and problems, (2) psychological insight to aid in the interpretation of the urban setting, (3) theological understanding of the mission of the church in the light of the situation, and (4) practical and technical skills to assist leaders in their work.[38]

The objective of the UTC was to "equip people to achieve more effective Christian mission in urban society." The

---

[37]G. Willis Bennett, "A History of the Urban Training Cooperative of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1971-91," unpublished monograph (January, 1992).

[38]Bennett, "History of UTC," [3].

effort was targeted toward first, professional leadership, then lay leadership, and finally toward seminarians.[39]

The task group decided that the UTC would be characterized by eight distinctives. First, UTC would be denominationally oriented. It would be a Southern Baptist endeavor. Second, it would be mobile. Following the suggestion of Bennett in Confronting a Crisis, the work would not be based in one city, but truly be a national effort. Third, it would be Home Mission Board coordinated. The HMB was given the task of managing the center and taking the lead in direction. Fourth, the UTC would use various models for performance. A major task for the UTC was to discover new models of ministry already working effectively and promote them and to innovate new models. Fifth, the UTC would be jointly funded from a number of resources. Funds were expected from the HMB, state conventions, associations, the six SBC seminaries, and fees for the conferences. Sixth, the UTC would be staffed by professionals in their fields, including but not limited to seminary and college professors, denominational employees, and other professionals, for example, urban designers, city specialists, and sociologists. Seventh, a small steering committee would be named to provide overall direction to the UTC. The first steering committee consisted of: Bennett, representing the seminaries; Charles Lee Williamson,

---

[39]Ibid.

representing the state conventions; Marc Bramblett, representing the local churches; Russell Bennett, representing the HMB; and Jim Duncan, representing associational and other denominational interests.[40] The eighth characteristic the task group hoped for was possible Doctor of Ministry seminary credit through the UTC conferences.[41]

The first advisory committee met in Atlanta on July 8, 1971. They were joined by Warren Rust, who was in the interview process to become the Secretary of the Department of Metropolitan Missions at the HMB. The draft of their discussions was sent to all the earlier attenders and it was

---

[40]Present at this meeting were the following and the agencies they represented:

Home Mission Board: Russell Bennett, Lloyd Corder, J. N. Evans

Golden Gate Seminary: Francis DuBose

Midwestern Seminary: V. Lavell Seats

New Orleans Seminary: Helen Falls

Southeastern Seminary: Tom Bland and Luther Copeland

Southern Seminary: Willis Bennett, Hugo Culpepper, Allen Graves, and Larry McSwain

Southwestern Seminary: C. W. Brister, Gerald Marsh, William Pinson

Seminary Extension: Raymond Rigdon

SBC Pastors: James Landes (TX) and Marc Bramblett (GA)

State Convention: Don Hammer (TX)

[41]Ibid.

approved with minor revisions. The final draft was also approved by the Administrative Committee of the HMB and the Board of Trustees. After Rust arrived at the HMB, his department continued to enlist the support of the seminaries, state conventions, and other agencies.[42]

The final report called for an advisory committee to be composed of the following: one person from each seminary, one person from each participating state convention, five persons from the HMB staff, three directors of missions from associations in urban areas, and five pastors to be selected by the HMB. At the first meeting of this advisory committee in June, 1972, prior to the SBC annual meeting in Philadelphia, a steering committee of seven was named, consisting of one seminary representative, one state convention employee, one pastor, one associational staff person, and two at large members. The secretary of the Metropolitan Missions Department at the HMB served as chairperson.[43]

The advisory committee also determined the funding base for the UTC. The HMB was to budget the funds annually and provide for staff travel expenses. The seminaries were to budget funds for either direct financial support, professional services, or facility usage. State conventions and

---

[42]Ibid., p. 5.

[43]Ibid., p. 6.

metropolitan associations provided financial support directly to the UTC that they sponsored.[44]

The first three-day training event was in Kansas City in the summer of 1973. The UTC board finally settled on a four-pronged goal statement. It was determined that the UTC would provide

> theological understanding of the mission of the church in the light of urban situations; psychological insight to aid in the interpretation of the urban setting; sociological awareness to urban needs and problems; and practical and technical skills to assist leaders in their work.[45]

Bennett writes that the UTC has used four methods of learning. First, the UTC provides for "direct exposure involving face to face or person to person encounter with a social situation in which the trainees personally experience some of the conditions familiar to city residents." This would eventually be called "the plunge." Second, the UTC used an interdisciplinary "reflection with emphasis upon the theological, sociological, and psychological factors. Third, the UTC provided theoretical and practical input in each training event. Fourth, private consultation with pastors, lay leaders, or associational officers were made available. Each UTC event is provided with an HMB staff

---

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., p. 7.

member, one or two seminary professors, and other pertinent professionals from the area.[46]

An UTC event may take one of several forms or a combination of forms as required by the setting. An "awareness conference" is a "formal meeting for discussion of mission needs and possible responses." It is normally conducted in eight hours and is targeted to all interested persons. An "institute" is a "meeting for instruction in or promotion of metropolitan missions." Its goal is to be a "teaching environment for communication of factual knowledge." It is designed to be an intensified version of the awareness conference. It is normally conducted in fifteen hours and requires two staff persons. An "equipping conference" is "a formal meeting for skill development." It normally requires eighteen hours of conferencing and is focused on the individual needs of a specific population. A "forum" is a meeting where lectures are presented by an expert in the field with an opportunity for the audience to ask questions. It also requires eighteen hours of conferencing. A "seminar" involves participants in a "facsimile portion of the urban environment. It is a sensitizing of the participants through an artificial situation." It normally requires twenty-four conference

---

[46]Ibid., p. 8.

hours. Other events may be created as the needs and resources arise.[47]

From 1971-1983, 181 UTC events were conducted across the country. There is no doubt that the UTC addressed the needs of metropolitan pastors, churches, and associations in the United States. But in 1980, the steering committee, of which Bennett was a member, began a discussion about a more focused kind of event to support urban missions. The result was the "Mega-Focus Cities" program (MFC).

There is little doubt that Confronting a Crisis and Bennett personally were the driving forces behind the innovations that resulted in the UTC. Allen affirms Bennett's role in the UTC when he says, "I see him as the 'mother' of the UTC."[48] George Bullard, a former student of Bennett and former employee of the Metropolitan Missions Department, HMB, says that the impetus for the UTC came as the SBC realized the need to train people how to do ministry in the city. Bennett, through his writings and his consultations, provided the conceptual framework for the UTC.[49]

Associational Strategy Planning

Russell Bennett, formerly of the Metropolitan

---

[47]This material is found in Bennett, "History of the UTC," pp. 9-10.

[48]Interview with Allen.

[49]Interview with Bullard.

Missions Department of the HMB and currently serving as the Executive Director of the Long Run Baptist Association, was a part of the team that created the UTC. R. Bennett met Bennett through Torney, a fellow staffer and former student of Bennett's at the seminary. R. Bennett has a unique perspective on the influence Bennett had on the SBC. Prior to the second world war, the SBC was a loosely knit collection of cooperating churches. The power of autonomy lay then with the churches. R. Bennett contends that in the years after the war, the playing field changed significantly. George W. Truett, famed pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, was a strong central figure as the chairperson of the Executive Committee of the SBC in the days before mandatory rotation of committee members.

A Church Organized and Functioning was written by William Houze, Sr. and W. O. Thomason in 1963.[50] This book signalled the move of the denomination to become a strong central authority through program development, missions support and training, and missions strategy and to encourage churches to depend on the denomination for their literature, organizations, and ministry models. The result was a "rubber-stamp" approach to church ministry. The years following the second world war, according to R. Bennett, saw an

---

[50]W. L. Howse and W. O. Thomason, A Church Organized and Functioning (Nashville: Convention Press, 1963).

enormous expansion of the staffs of the SBC agencies, in particular the Sunday School Board.[51]

Bennett, in Crisis, advocated that strategy planning and program development should happen at the local church and the associational level. R. Bennett recalls Bennett's central theme every time he spoke was, "Look at your community." R. Bennett contends that idea was novel among SBC personnel. SBC agencies had been saying, "Do it this way," whether the field was Atlanta, Los Angeles, or Gravel Switch.

The result at the HMB in Atlanta, where R. Bennett was employed, was a program they called Associational Strategy Planning (ASP). ASP was first developed in 1969-70 by Torney and R. Bennett to encourage the indigenous leadership of metropolitan associations to plan their own futures rather than depending on denominational agencies to do the same thing. The HMB staff developed a format where they did the initial research but then left the information with the local leaders to determine their needs and to set their goals.

R. Bennett says that Bennett did more than any other person to revolutionize the way associations designed their work. He calls Bennett a "watershed figure" in Southern Baptist life. But he also says that Bennett was "the cata-

---

[51]Statement by Russell Bennett, Executive Director of the Long Run Baptist Association, in an interview with the author at Panama City Beach, Florida, on May 19, 1993.

lyst not the chemist." Bennett generated ideas that other persons carried out. That task was left to others who were more skilled in implementation and less skilled in creativity.[52]

The Mega-Focus Cities Program

The UTC board sensed that the efforts in the city needed to have more structure, according to Bennett. His hope was that the UTC could work in close collaboration with the Metropolitan Missions Department at the HMB to target specific cities for mission efforts. Bennett remembers that the Metropolitan Missions department came to Louisville to meet with Bennett, McSwain, and Russell Bennett, all on the seminary's staff, in May, 1981, for a two day meeting in a classroom with a wrap-around chalkboard. Bullard, a staff member of the Metropolitan Missions department who came to Louisville, also remembers that event. In retrospect, he says Bennett "obviously played a very strong historical role in that program."[53] Throughout the day, this team sketched on the chalkboards the beginnings of what later came to be called Mega-Focus Cities (MFC). MFC has come to be an intensive research and strategy planning resource focused on a specific metropolitan area within a specific time period.

---

[52]Ibid.

[53]Interview with Bullard.

They divided the nation into regions, identified the outstanding cities in each region, and began to strategize how to work most effectively with those cities. The HMB staff copied the information, took it back to Atlanta to refine it, and then launched the MFC. An early policy was that in every MFC campaign, there would be an UTC event.

Bennett is convinced that the MFC is the finest program the HMB has ever undertaken. He is encouraged that Larry Lewis, the current president of the HMB, has heartily endorsed the efforts. Bennett concedes that it has probably accomplished more than he ever hoped. Cross remembers that Bennett served as confidante to all of the persons who have been responsible for the UTC events.[54]

Project: Assistance for Churches in Transitional Communities

Patterning after Bennett's study, Don Mabry conducted a study in 1973 entitled "Studying the Churches in Communities in Crisis" for the HMB. Mabry concludes that over 2000 churches will not exist in the years ahead unless some significant changes are made. The threat of literally closing church doors again pushes the SBC to innovate assistance programs. The result of the study is Project: Assistance for Churches in Transitional Communities (PACT).

---

[54]Statement by Dale Cross, former Executive Director of the Metropolitan Chicago Baptist Association, in an interview with the author at Louisville, Kentucky, on March 15, 1993.

Developed under the leadership of Rust in the Metropolitan Missions Department in 1975-76, this inter-agency project was organized into a program to train leaders who would then lead the PACT studies. Larry McSwain, Dale Cross, Bullard, Don Hammer, and others were some of the early participants. The program had a heavy community ministry emphasis. Allen took over the PACT program in 1979 and, with Bullard, developed the handbook entitled Shaping a Future for the Church in the Changing Community.[55]

Allen and Bullard, in Shaping a Future, write that "PACT is a Home Mission Board response to the needs of churches in significantly changing communities. . . . A network of 95 persons located across the United States are being trained and certified as PACT consultants (who) contract with a local church . . . to provide a consultation."[56] The difference between a PACT study and an UTC event is that a PACT study works with a specific church to design ministries for a specific community. The UTC may take various forms of conferencing without specific consultation.

Although Allen and Bullard do not cite Bennett's work in Shaping a Future, Allen contends that PACT studies are another of the direct descendants of Bennett's

---

[55]Jere Allen and George Bullard, Shaping a Future for the Church in the Changing Community (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, 1981).

[56]Ibid., p. 6.

Confronting a Crisis. Bennett, also, was one of the first persons enlisted to train the first PACT consultants. Again, Bennett's work has caused a ripple effect on many programs in the SBC.

Bullard traces Bennett's influence on denominational programs to his own days as a seminary student under Bennett's teaching. When asked, "What are the themes that you have carried into your work life that you learned from Bennett?" he replies,

> The first one . . . is context. What is the context in which churches are located? A second thing is . . . it's got to be church focused. And then third . . . the role of the association is very important. Willis always focused on that. Then the culture of the churches, in tandem with theology, may say so much more than people are willing to say.[57]

Bullard is now the state missions director for the South Carolina Baptist Convention. His own emphasis in his work there is on the "process" of ministry. Bullard is convinced that his emphasis on process in his work in South Carolina is rooted in the teaching of Bennett twenty years ago.[58]

Another contribution that Bennett has made according to Bullard is an understanding of the need for "long-term work" with congregations. He says that Bennett was not an advocate of the "quick fix" but of long-term solutions to bring about change.[59]

---

[57]Interview with Bullard.

[58]Ibid.

[59]Ibid.

Transitional Communities Ministerial Caucus

Allen was the pastor of the Bainbridge Street Baptist Church in Richmond in 1973, when one of his fellow area pastors, Bill Tomlinson, attended a conference in Louisville. Bennett was on the program for that conference. Tomlinson returned to Richmond with an idea suggested by Bennett that urban pastors should get together to support each other in their work. The churches in Richmond formed the first Transitional Communities Ministerial Caucus (TCMC). Allen credits Bennett with being the "father" of the TCMC.

When Allen moved to the Alabama Baptist Convention, he formed TCMC groups all over the state. Later, when he went to the HMB, he formed TCMC groups at the national level. The TCMC concept has multiplied across the United States in a cell-group type of growth. Again, Allen goes back to the Crisis study as the breakthrough experience for Southern Baptists and urban ministry.[60]

The Center for Urban Church Studies

The Center for Urban Church Studies (CUCS) is another output of Confronting a Crisis. Bennett recalls being invited to an all-day planning meeting to discuss collaborative efforts for research purposes. Rose relates the story, now highly mythologized, that in 1979, Grady

---

[60]Interview with Allen.

Cothen, president of the Sunday School Board, and William Tanner, president of the HMB, sat together in a restaurant at the Chattanooga Choo-Choo and designed CUCS on a napkin. Their dream was to help churches and agencies get the real data about what was happening to Southern Baptists. Another dream was to discover the models of urban ministry that were working out in the field.[61] At the first planning meeting in 1980, a decision was made to organize a center, with a definite home office, and to be jointly supported by the agencies of the SBC, including the Woman's Missionary Union, the Brotherhood Commission, the HMB, the Foreign Mission Board (FMB), the Sunday School Board, and all six seminaries.[62]

The first five of the above agencies were entitled to one board representative each. It was also decided that the six seminaries would share one representative. Bennett was named as the first, and only, seminary representative on the board. Rose indicates that the board was primarily a search committee for enlisting a paid director, which Rose later became.[63]

The first meeting of the board was called to write the constitution, draw up the bylaws, and determine the budgeting. Bennett recalls some questions about how the

---

[61]Interview with Rose.

[62]Interview with G. W. Bennett, March 23, 1993.

[63]Interview with Rose.

chairperson of the board would be elected. By a vote of three to two, with Bennett voting for his opponent and vice versa, Bennett was elected to the chair. Bennett served as the only chairperson in the five years the CUCS was in existence.

The involvement of the Foreign Mission Board (FMB) is of particular interest because it is the first time that the denomination's joint efforts at urban studies included the world-class cities. Bennett is convinced that the FMB added an important new dimension to the work, but it was also impacted by the research on American cities and urbanity.

The office of the CUCS was located at the Sunday School Board in Nashville with Rose as the first director. Rose was a Southwestern Seminary graduate, a former pastor and director of missions. The Sunday School Board gave the space and computer service in addition to their budget allocation. Kirk Hadaway was soon hired as the first research director.

Hadaway is tentative about the accomplishments of CUCS. CUCS was an "experiment," he says. It raised awareness of urban issues in the SBC agencies, but had little impact beyond the agencies. The location of the office in Nashville was resented by the agencies who resented the influence of the Sunday School Board, although Hadaway contends that the Sunday School Board had relatively

little involvement. That was precisely the problem, Hadaway says. "They (the agencies) didn't quite know what to do with us."[64]

Financial struggles finally took their toll on the center. Bennett relates that with the tightening of resources in the mid-1980s, agencies became more reluctant to share in the financial assessment. Also, the FMB, due to the influence of the center, became much more interested in doing its own research on the cities of the world and began to pull back into itself. Out of the sense of changes coming to the center, Rose moved to a position with the HMB and Hadaway, after a brief tenure as the interim director of the center, became a researcher with the Sunday School Board. The decision was made to terminate the work of the center in 1986. All of the holdings of the center went to the Sunday School Board with the agreement that Hadaway could continue the research that had begun in the center. Bennett is convinced that the efforts to establish the center have not been lost. The FMB, the HMB, and the Sunday School Board are continuing the work individually that began corporately in the CUCS.

Rose has a different perspective on why the center closed its doors. In the mid-1980's, the SBC controversy was raging. Every agency was struggling with new board

---

[64]Statement by Kirk Hadaway, former researcher with the Center for Urban Church Studies, in a telephone interview with the author on April 21, 1993.

members with different perspectives and methodologies. Consequently, the agency heads were primarily concerned with keeping their own agencies together. Rose was dealing directly with agency directors for his work, but their attention was focused, of necessity, on the turmoil. The self-preservation instincts in the agencies increased the tendency toward turf battles. Rose gives the example of the FMB saying in one way or another, "You haven't been a foreign missionary; how can you relate to what we need?" Indirectly, the CUCS became a victim of the controversy in the SBC as in-fighting, rather than research and strategy planning, took center stage, according to Rose.[65]

Hadaway is now a researcher with the United Church of Christ home missions office. He, like Rose, watched the demise of the center from the inside looking out. Hadaway lays much of the blame for the closing of CUCS on the denominational agencies who never did truly invest in the research. The FMB, in particular, was resistant to the center's research and desired all along to pull out. Only the pressure of the other agencies to participate kept the FMB's name on the letterhead. When it was announced that Rose had taken a position with the HMB, the FMB immediately announced the selection of their own researcher.[66]

---

[65]Interview with Rose.

[66]Interview with Hadaway.

When Bennett was asked, "In retrospect, was the center a good idea?," he responded, "I would give the center high marks for what it accomplished in causing every agency to see the importance of research in ways they had not seen it before." When asked, "Is there still a need for such a center?" he replies,

> I still think there is good wisdom in there being one pool of urban research that could be shared with all parties that wanted it, instead of each doing its own . . . . But the agencies have learned to share their research with each other. For example, anything the FMB learns, I hear about and I get it. In a sense, the sharing started emerging anyway.

Bennett is also pleased that three books were published out of the work of the center. They are Guidelines for Effective Urban Church Ministry by Bennett, An Urban World: Churches Face the Future edited by Rose and Hadaway, and The Urban Challenge: Reaching America's Cities with the Gospel also edited by Rose and Hadaway.[67] CUCS also published a short-lived journal. Rose remembers that after publication of the journal was terminated, the Sunday School Board received more requests for back issues than any publication they had ever produced. The three books published by the center, however, have become church and community standards. Rose says that Bennett's Guidelines made him "without a

---

[67]G. Willis Bennett, Effective Urban Church Ministry (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983); Larry L. Rose and C. Kirk Hadaway, eds., The Urban Challenge: Reaching America's Cities with the Gospel (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982); Larry L. Rose and C. Kirk Hadaway, eds., An Urban World: Churches Face the Future (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1984).

doubt, in any agency . . . the one we turned to as THE scholar in urban ministry for Southern Baptists, both in his writings and in his speaking and personal influence."[68]

Rose, now the Director of Missions of the Tarrant County Baptist Association in Fort Worth, says that he had the privilege to call Bennett "boss" from 1980-86. From that unique perspective, he watched Bennett bring an informal influence to bear on the denominational leadership to support urban evangelism. That influence was felt most acutely when financial resources were allocated. Rose says that the personal influence of Bennett on Bullard, Hammer, and others helped provide funds to support the urban mission initiatives.[69]

Bennett relates that through this process, he has been surprised by the high status given to him because of his association with Southern Seminary. He says that "There was a high respect and valuing for the leadership role that Southern Seminary provided." He affirms the perception that Southern was the only seminary doing this quality and type of research. No other seminary had a church and community department or a social work school, let alone a curriculum of the depth of substance as Southern.

Allen affirms the perception of Southern as unique in the field for Southern Baptists, but he goes a step

---

[68]Interview with Rose.

[69]Ibid.

further to affirm the leadership of Bennett in making the seminary so distinctive. Allen says that many times during his years in the pastorate, he would communicate with Bennett for advice. He says that Bennett always treated him like a colleague and a co-worker. Later, when Allen moved to the denominational posts, he says that he called on Bennett for conference leadership because he always had something important to say.

Bennett has influenced the theological understanding of urban ministry, also. Allen and Rose both recall Bennett many times challenging his audience with the question, "Name one thing that is outside the interest of God." Bennett called his listeners, whether students or conferees, to consider the heart of God when addressing the needs of humanity. If God cares about people and their living conditions, so should we.

Bennett had a basic methodology in his approach to church planning, according to Allen. He asked three questions. "What are the facts? What do the facts mean? What do we do with the facts?" This simple outline provides an insight into the genius of Bennett. His gift is defining the process. Is it any wonder that every new project found in this chapter to which Bennett gave leadership first determined its objectives and the ground rules? Bennett seems to affirm the axiom that good planning now prevents disasters in the future.

Rose says that Bennett awakened him to the unique needs of the city. Through Bennett, Rose came to affirm that life in the city is very different from life in the country, and the church's ministries must address those differences. Bennett taught Rose that ministry in the city raises an integrity issue; that integrity in ministry means doing what is right, rather than what is successful. Rose is convinced that churches are called to deal with people at the point of their needs.[70]

Denominational Consultations

Bennett had achieved high visibility through the Crisis study and his frequent appearances on the platforms at Ridgecrest and Glorieta. Consequently, he was called upon by the SBC to help in a number of the denominational agencies.[71]

A premiere example of Bennett's work as a researcher and consultant was a 1969 study for the Inter-Agency Council of the SBC. The council contains representatives from each of the denomination's agencies who meet regularly to coordinate the work of their respective agencies. The goal of the

---

[70]Interview with Rose.

[71]Bennett was also a founding member of the Southern Baptist Research Fellowship in the late 1960's. McSwain says that the purpose of the SBRF is "to provide a forum for sharing current research among Southern Baptists as it relates to denominational leadership, state conventions, associations, and congregations." (Interview with McSwain, June 11, 1993.) Bennett has served as both vice-president and president of the SBRF.

council is to draw boundaries for each agency's work so that duplication of efforts may be avoided. The study's report was entitled "The Effects of Long Holiday Weekends on Church Life and Work."[72] Following the recommendation of Jesse Williams in the Research and Statistics Department of the Sunday School Board, SBC, Bennett contacted twenty-five churches in different cities. The pastors of these churches were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their concerns about Congress' proposal to consolidate national holidays onto Mondays to create long weekends.

Bennett determined six effects that the long weekend bill would have on church life. First, "there will need to be a meaningful emphasis on worship and religious instruction." The churches would have to stress to their congregants the importance of Sunday worship and Bible study.[73]

Second, a new emphasis on stewardship would be needed to keep the weekly offerings consistent for the holidays. The pastors feared that a weekend away with the family meant a weekend away from stewardship responsibilities. Third, Bennett called for a re-thinking of the sabbath tradition. He advocated a release from the legalistic stance that worship can only happen on Sunday morning. Worship experiences at other times in the week

---

[72]G. Willis Bennett, "The Effects of Long Holiday Weekends on Church Life and Work" (Nashville: Inter-Agency Council, Southern Baptist Convention, 1969).

[73]Ibid, p. 22.

needed to be developed and valued by the churches. Fourth, Bennett called for a renewed emphasis on evangelism. He writes, "As Christians scatter across the nation, they should be sure they go witnessing." Congregants should be reminded of the Christian's call to witness "as they go."[74]

Fifth, Christians need to be taught "how to achieve personally rewarding vacations." Bennett called for refreshment and renewal for believers. The church, he says, should not heap additional guilt on over-burdened people by denying them vacation time. The sixth need, according to Bennett, is the need to understand the impact on family life a long holiday weekend may present. He writes, "The pressures of close associations are more than some families can bear. They sometimes cut their vacations short and return home, having discovered how much they dislike each other."[75] Bennett's advice is for the church to be proactive in building healthy, strong families that can enjoy each other's strengths and bear with each other's weaknesses.

Bennett's final recommendations to the council were to produce more publications, provide additional training to pastors and staff ministers serving in the churches through the field services workers, and to coordinate the efforts of the SBC agencies to cover a broader range of needs in the

---

[74]Ibid., pp. 23-24.

[75]Ibid., p. 26.

churches. Bennett's interest in developing a theology of leisure was evident throughout the study. His personal interest in this topic was emphasized by John Dever, one of Bennett's graduate students, in his doctoral dissertation.[76]

Bennett's Ministry through Writing

The legacies a professor leaves to future generations are his writings and his students. This section will look at Bennett's writing of numerous articles and one of his books. Of course, Bennett also leaves behind countless private consultations with and lectures to pastors, denominational executives, and students. Most of those are recorded only in the private notes and the memories of his listeners.

Articles in Denominational Publications

A significant portion of Bennett's work with the denomination was through the denomination's publications. Although Bennett's writings have been published in other sources, only his work in SBC publications is considered here. The reader will notice that these articles will be reviewed in chronological order to give the reader a sense of the evolution of Bennett's interests.

---

[76]See Chapter 4 for a discussion of Dever's interest in the topic.

Bennett's first article published in an SBC publication was an article in the Review and Expositor, the Southern Seminary faculty journal. "Play and Its Meaning for Preaching" traces the role of playing in human culture. Bennett calls for learning through playing and the use of humor from the pulpit. It calls on the reader to develop a theology of play that allows for creative expression. This article was written while Bennett was still a student. It is unusual for a student's work to be published in the Review and Expositor.[77]

Bennett was frequently published during his years as a pastor. Most often, they were editorials or sermons picked up by interested publications. His first article published as a young ethics professor is found in Pastoral Psychology. Entitled "The Social Environment and Its Influence on Counseling Procedures in the Rural Church," the article describes the rural-subculture and gives practical advice on pastoral counseling in those areas. Bennett had just come from a rural church and these issues were fresh on his mind. He had not yet invested in urban issues to the extent he would later.[78]

---

[77]Willis Bennett, "Play and Its Meaning for Preaching," Review and Expositor, 47 (April, 1950), 165-172.

[78]G. Willis Bennett, "The Social Environment and Its Influence on Counseling Procedure in the Rural Church," Pastoral Psychology, 10, no. 96 (September 1959), 31-36

In 1963, Bennett responded to the question "How may Baptist churches prepare for the community problems of unemployment?" in The Baptist Training Union. This first public encounter with a "social need" gave Bennett the opportunity to influence his readers to be more sensitive to all social issues. Not surprisingly, he advocates community surveys, cooperative efforts, and awareness of community resources as tools to combat unemployment.[79]

The Home Missions magazine of October, 1965, included an article entitled "New Life for Declining Churches in Declining Communities" written by Bennett. The focus of the article is on the struggles of rural churches to cope with their changing social environment. The article calls for an honest appraisal of the problems that rural churches face and an awareness of the opportunities yet ahead for rural churches. This article signals a departure for Bennett from his focus on the rural church because it is the last article that Bennett wrote specifically addressing the unique needs of rural churches.[80]

The next publication of Bennett is an annotated bibliography on the church in the urban community that was compiled by the graduate seminar in Church and Community in

---

[79]G. Willis Bennett, "The Pastor's Page," Baptist Training Union Magazine, 38 (December 1963), 17.

[80]G. Willis Bennett, "New Life for Declining Churches in Declining Communities," Home Missions, 36 (October 1965), 28-30.

the fall of 1965. Not surprisingly, the books suggested by the seminar include The Secular City, How the Church Can Minister to the World Without Losing Itself, The Effective City Church, Planning for Protestantism in Urban America, and Protestantism in Suburban Life.[81] These are the books that came to shape the academic life of Bennett as he prepared for his faculty address in the fall of 1966.

The Review and Expositor published an article of Bennett's entitled "The City's Challenge to the Church" in the summer of 1966. Frequently citing the books named above, the article collates the material into a single presentation. The result is an advocacy of the church remaining in the city to speak to all kinds of social issues. Bennett calls upon "individual churches to adjust their organizations, programs, and schedules to fit the demands of a new day." The article closes with a denunciation of an "urban theology." He writes, "Herein rest theology not for urban work alone but for the work of God

---

[81]Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1965); Langdon Gilkey, How the Church Can Minister to the World without Losing Itself (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Murray H. Leiffer, The Effective City Church (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961); Lyle Schaller, Planning for Protestantism in Urban America (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965); and Frederick A. Shippey, Protestantism in Suburban Life (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964). The reader will note that these books are also referred to in the next chapter of this dissertation.

through man in all this earthly realm." Bennett believes that there is not "urban theology," just "theology."[82]

In the Home Missions magazine of January, 1966, Bennett published the first of a series of articles that were later compiled into Confronting a Crisis. This was Bennett's first exposure to the entire denomination as an "urban expert." It is also the first installment of the work that gained for him that title. The article summarizes the research methodology Bennett used to conduct the study, it documents the decline of churches, and it includes a round-table discussion about ministry to the "negroes." Although it seems out-of-date for the 1990s, it is important to note that this was a ground-breaking article for a southern white denomination.[83]

The November, 1966, issue of Home Missions printed a confusing introduction to Bennett's article entitled "The City's Crisis of Change." It says, "This is the first of three articles by Bennett that reveal the facts and ideas he discovered in the last year as he probed the problem of transitional and inner-city communities on special assignment from the Home Mission Board." The confusion results from the fact that the first real article on the research was published in January of that same year. That article,

---

[82]G. Willis Bennett, "The City's Challenge to the Church," Review and Expositor, 68 (Summer 1966), 249-261.

[83]G. Willis Bennett, "The City Church and the Area of Transition," Home Missions, 37 (January 1966), 6-28.

however, was primarily a report of the statistical section of the book. The November article is the first "analytical" article to be published. This article advocates a "theology of involvement." Bennett writes, "The churches in the city which are accomplishing the most and making the greatest appeal to people today are the churches which are more totally involved in the lives of people . . . . Persons like these are not attracted by pious enunciations, but they can understand the language of the loving and symbolic act."[84]

The second article in this series appeared the next month. Entitled "Are Baptists Lagging in New Ministries?," Bennett demonstrates that several denominations were ahead of Southern Baptists in developing proactive ministries in urban settings. Citing the Episcopalians, Catholics, Presbyterians, Lutherans, National Baptists, and others, Bennett applauds their urban programs while trying to encourage the SBC to develop new ministries. Bennett also encourages cooperative efforts among churches of different denominations. This cooperative philosophy continues to stand out as a hallmark of Bennett's work. He concludes the article with a call for new types of congregations in cities. Bennett was pushing the boundaries of SBC tradition to expand the vision of the Baptist church in the city.[85]

---

[84]G. Willis Bennett, "The City's Crisis of Change," Home Missions 37:11 (November, 1966), pp. 10-11.

[85]G. Willis Bennett, "Are Baptists Lagging in New Ministries?," Home Missions, 37 (December 1966), 26-32.

The third and last article of this series is found in the January, 1967, issue of Home Missions. Bennett wrote in this article that "old disciplines must be pursued too with renewed enthusiasm." His reference is to the Baptist traditional missiology of reaching the entire world and all its people with the gospel. His call, however, is for new forms to promote the old message. This is one of Bennett's most "evangelistic" articles to date. He writes,

> There is no inclination on the part of this writer to belittle the revival, intelligent personal soul-winning efforts, door-to-door visitation, or the city-wide evangelistic meeting. These have been used effectively and may continue to bear fruit. It is evident, however, that they do not always communicate the message of Christ in a way that captures the attention of the inner-city dweller. When the baptism rate declines sharply in the inner-city churches, even when the churches exist in the midst of unreached people, it is time to search for ways to supplement previous appeals.[86]

A key phrase of this article is "in-service training." Linking the last chapter of the Crisis book and this article, Bennett is laying the groundwork for the Urban Training Cooperative, the Center for Urban Church Studies, and Mega-Focus Cities. But Bennett does not abandon his social work roots. He advocates that churches develop literacy programs, language work, and living assistance projects to combat the problems of the city. Although these

---

[86]G. Willis Bennett, "Applying Old Truths to New Questions," Home Missions, 38 (January 1967), 26-30.

programs may be new ministries of the churches, Bennett also sees them as new forms of evangelism.[87]

Bennett's next article appearing in a denominational publication is entitled "A Theology of Leisure."[88] This article follows an interest that Bennett demonstrated in the classroom. Stemming from his consultation on holiday weekends discussed above, the article seeks to outline theological affirmations of leisure. Bennett writes that "a theology of leisure cannot be separated from a theology of vocation or calling; our problem is not leisure or work, but the proper use of time. Returning to the Eden stories, Bennett recalls that God blesses leisure by his participation in it. Jesus calls his disciples to follow him into rest, relaxation, meditation, and contemplation. The scriptural emphasis on the sabbath observance gives Bennett's reader yet another biblical model for leisure. The article concludes with a section entitled "Implications for the Church." Bennett says that the church needs to learn "how to follow its people"; in other words, the church needs to provide worship and service opportunities where people gather for leisure. Weekday ministries also become

---

[87]Ibid.

[88]Bennett's next actual publication was the text of his faculty address. This address is discussed in the next chapter and so this article will be held until that time. The text of the address appeared in the Review and Expositor, 64 (Summer 1967), 297-311. The article discussed here is "A Theology of Leisure," Home Missions, 38 (November 1967), 16-20.

more important as more church members spend weekends in leisure activities.

Bennett certainly advocated innovation in the theological reflections on leisure. He was part of the generation of Americans who saw improved mass communications, computers, complicated transportation networks, and disposable income as harbingers of a country with plenty of time to fill with recreation. The technological wave of the 1960s and 70s promised a liberation from work. But, from my perspective as a young adult in the 1990s, quite the opposite has happened. Portable telephone and beeping pagers have not freed us from work to enjoy leisure more; they have simply increased the bondage of work that spills into personal time. Facsimile machines hooked to cellular telephones means that an executive may sit on a Hawaiian beach and carry on conversations with the home office in Iowa as if it were in the next room. At that point, Bennett and his colleagues were right in their affirmation of labor and leisure, but they underestimated the potential for overload that work holds for families and churches.

Church Administration magazine, a publication of the Sunday School Board of the SBC, devoted the January, 1968, issue to the discussion of the role of the church in the community. These articles signal the influence that the Crisis study had on different denominational agencies.

Bennett wrote an article entitled "What is Your Community Saying to Your Church . . . Or Are You Listening?" He identified the institutions that are trying to get the attention of churches in transitional neighborhoods. Under a section entitled "Who Speaks?," Bennett says that the families, the educational institutions, the law enforcement agencies, the health and welfare agencies, the housing industry, and other organized activity groups are sending strong messages to churches. They are giving a reading of the health of the communities if churches would just listen. Bennett wants the reader to consider the community as the context for Christian ministry. He advocates demographic research, reading the popular literature of the community, interviews with the leaders, both professional and volunteer, and personal surveys as tools to improve the "hearing loss" of the urban church.[89]

An academic article written by Bennett appeared in the Review and Expositor in the Spring, 1969, issue. Entitled "New Patterns of Church Ministry," the article seeks to push outward the boundaries of church ministry. Bennett cites the decline of existing churches as an alarming indicator that current forms of ministry are outdated. He sees hope in a revitalized theology of involvement that will motivate church members to take part

---

[89]G. Willis Bennett, "What Is Your Community Saying to Your Church . . . Or Are You Listening?," Church Administration, 10 (January 1968), 14-16.

in new forms of ministry. Weekday community ministry is naturally one form of action that Bennett advocates.[90]

One year later, Bennett's next article was published in a special supplemental issue of Review and Expositor. "The Witness of the Serving Church" is a lengthy article that appeared in an issue devoted to the topic "The Serving Church in a Time of Crisis." This supplemental issue was the response of the seminary to a resolution adopted by the SBC meeting in Houston, Texas, in 1968. The resolution, "Confronting a Crisis in Our Country," was precipitated by the student revolts, racial tension and the resultant riots, and the public outcry over the war in Vietnam. While Bennett was not a part of the drafting of the resolution, he was asked by the seminary to enlist the writers for the special issue. The HMB purchased 5,000 copies of this supplemental issue to distribute to their constituents.

In his article, Bennett writes

> This is a world characterized by affluence and poverty, scientific advance and political perplexities, organization and disintegration, revolution and anxiety, but it is a new age not to be despised but welcomed. The issues relating to war, poverty, race, and student revolt are indeed the current issues that demand review and are in one way or another connected to the national crisis. The feelings of alienation abroad in the land and the apparent social unrest should concern every

---

[90]G. Willis Bennett, "New Patterns of Church Ministry," Review and Expositor, 66 (Spring 1969), 155-165.

> thoughtful person. Surely the church can ill-afford to be indifferent and uninvolved.[91]

Bennett asks the church to respond healthily to the opportunity for change being presented. Not surprisingly, he calls for continued research to help ministers understand the social climate in which they serve, experimentation in new forms of ministry, continuing evaluation of programs, and flexibility. Finally, Bennett pleads with the church to adopt a theology that allows for change and growth. He writes, "Obedience to God requires that the church shall always exist in a state of becoming."[92]

A brief article by Bennett appeared in The Baptist Program in February, 1970. This magazine is a general interest publication of the Executive Committee, SBC. "Urbanization and the Church" seems intended to provide a lexicon of terms for the casual reader. Paragraph-length explanations are given of terms like "megalopolis," "suburban growth," and "boom cities." The article calls for additional church extension work, help for established urban churches, and cooperative efforts with non-SBC entities. I perceive this article was meant to get the attention of key leaders and pastors who had not yet connected to the urban

---

[91]G. Willis Bennett, "The Witness of the Serving Church," Review and Expositor, 66 Supplement (May 1969), 101-114.

[92]Ibid.

ministry issues Bennett had advocated since the early 1960s.[93]

Bennett contributed an article to a twelve-issue series published by Home Missions magazine in 1970. The focus of the series is "Toward Creative Urban Strategy." Other contributors include Elton Trueblood, Walker Knight, Bill Pinson, Walter Delamarter, Lyle Schaller, and several others. Bennett's article focused on the educational needs of ministers serving in urban areas. Bennett writes, "Today's clergyman must be a man (sic) who is able to live in and share the world, understanding it in its secular context both sociologically and psychologically."[94] In the article he advocates an educational plan that is itself open to innovation and creativity. Bennett sees these innovations happening in the ACTS and UTC program discussed above. These innovations need to be carried down into seminary and college training for the ministers of the future.[95]

Bennett carried his themes of community awareness, a theology of involvement, and ministry innovation into an article published in The Deacon, a SBC magazine directed to lay leaders, in an article published in 1971. The article

---

[93]G. Willis Bennett, "Urbanization and the Church," The Baptist Program, (February 1970), 14-15.

[94]G. Willis Bennett, "Educating Churches for Urban Environment" (sic), Home Missions, 41 (June 1970), 6-10.

[95]Ibid.

seeks to train church lay leaders in "helping ministries." This article is focused on both rural and urban residents and advocates their awareness of their community, wherever they may find themselves. Bennett anonymously uses a situation remarkably similar to Olive Chapel Baptist Church to illustrate how one church worked with public agencies to improve the lives of community residents. He urges deacons to do three things. First, deacons need to become aware of the needs and resources of their communities, including social agencies. Second, deacons need to become active volunteers in those agencies. And third, deacons should be working to improve the lives of all persons in the community, not just the lives of church members.[96]

Bennett's next article, "The Case for Multiuse of Church Facilities," appeared in the September, 1971, issue of Church Administration. Bennett contends that to use a building worth $500,000 or even $50,000 only six to eight hours a week is not only a waste, but poor stewardship of God's resources. The solution, says Bennett, is to complete a survey of the church's community to determine the needs in the community that the church space could meet. Bennett provides numerous examples of multiuse, such as day cares, youth programs, a coffee house, and Head Start programs. He concludes the article by encouraging churches to consider

---

[96]G. Willis Bennett, "The Deacon and Community Agencies," The Deacon, 1 (Jan-Feb-Mar 1971), 37-38.

designing multiuse space when they decide to enlarge the church plant.[97]

Two years later, Bennett's next article was printed. This article signals the expansion of Bennett's interests specifically out of the Church and Community field. Entitled "Ministry as Profession and Calling," the article discusses the theological and vocational inferences drawn from a minister's choice of career. Bennett writes that the concepts of ministry as profession and calling are not mutually exclusive. Ministry is both a profession and a calling. The multiplication of ministry models other than the pastorate has opened up many new avenues of ministry, according to Bennett. Some ministers in these less traditional roles may struggle with their own ministry identity. That identity crisis may be lessened by a commitment to longevity in a particular ministry role, Bennett writes. More training is also needed at the seminary level for ministers seeking church staff or other new forms of ministry. This article is significant in Bennett's career because it reads as if written by a seminary administrator rather than a Church and Community

---

[97]G. Willis Bennett, "The Case for Multiuse of Church Facilities," Church Administration, 13 (September 1971), 12-14.

professor. There can be no doubt that this also signaled Bennett's growing interest in administration.[98]

The above article is Bennett's last published journal article for ten years. These were intensely busy years for Bennett professionally, but they are little reflected in his writing during this period. Like many administrators, Bennett let his writing become secondary to his daily administrative work.

"The Changing Face of the Contemporary City" was published in the Fall of 1983. This issue of Review and Expositor is dedicated to the "Churches and the Cities." In the lead article, Bennett looks back on how far the cities have come since Crisis was researched eighteen years previously. Bennett writes that change in the life of a city is inevitable, as it is in all of life. The past twenty years have seen change through growth, through decline, through redevelopment, through demographic shifts, and through a change of lifestyles by urban residents. The article gives a thorough catalogue of the changes in the nation's cities. Why is Bennett so concerned with the changes in cities? He is concerned because churches have not adapted their ministries to fit the changes. His

---

[98]G. Willis Bennett, "Ministry as Profession and Calling," Review and Expositor, 70 (Winter 1973), 5-15.

familiar theme of "know your community" resounds through the article with renewed vigor and appeal.[99]

Search, the SBC's publication for vocational ministers, published an article of Bennett's entitled "Forced Termination of Staff Ministers" in the Fall of 1990. Seeking to help ministers avoid, or if necessary to cope with, the forced termination from a ministry position, the article advocates the search for an honest answer to the question "why?" Bennett lists a number of options for what might have gone wrong from the start. Getting the wrong person for the wrong job, inadequate employment agreements, failure in supervision, a misuse of freedom, and incompatible opinions are all possibilities. Bennett advocates redemption of the relationship between the pastor and the church as the first and best option. But if saving the relationship is impossible, then the church must proceed with grace and consideration.[100]

This article is interesting for three reasons. First, Bennett is going back many years to his role in seminary alumni placement as a background to the article. By 1990, Bennett had been away from this office for some time.

---

[99]G. Willis Bennett, "The Changing Face of the Contemporary City," Review and Expositor, 80 (Fall 1983), 489-499.

[100]G. Willis Bennett, "Forced Termination of Staff Ministers," Search, 21 (Fall 1990), 44-49.

Second, a pattern is developing that Bennett's articles tend either to follow or precede a student's research in the area. Dever wrote a dissertation on leisure around the time of Bennett's consultation on holiday weekends. Bennett's faculty address was refined by classroom discussions of Harvey Cox and Gibson Winter (as demonstrated in Chapter 4). And Jeff Pounders, a graduate student of McSwain, wrote a dissertation on forced termination of ministers in 1990, at the same time as this article. Are these coincidences? They are probably not. Bennett is a truly interactive professor and student. He constantly looks and listens for new fields to explore and then interacts with those already exploring them. From that perspective, Bennett has had a profound impact on his students. His personal interests become the interests of his students, and the interests of his students, become his.

Third, this article demonstrates a growing awareness of Bennett of the need to be gender inclusive in his writing. His early writings, like those of his peers, often encouraged ministers to be "men of" something. This article seems careful to allow room for a minister to be of either gender.

Bennett's last article to be published before this dissertation is "Case Study: An Urban Church Model: Allen

Temple Baptist Church."[101] The article is a re-telling of the Allen Temple research project for a different audience. Since the book, itself, will be reviewed next, the article will simply be noted here for the sake of chronology.

The Allen Temple Project

Rose, in his introduction to Effective Urban Church Ministry, writes that the CUCS had received many requests for a "model" for urban churches.[102] Bennett was enlisted by CUCS to provide a model and a book based on that model. The result was Effective Urban Church Ministry.

Bennett spent part of a sabbatical year at the Allen Temple Baptist Church in Oakland, California, in 1982. Allen Temple's pastor, J. Alfred Smith, opened its doors, records, and members' time to Bennett so that he could see all areas of the church at work. Bennett combined his own perspectives gained through two decades of research in urban ministry with a church case study to produce a book that is theoretical in nature, but pragmatic in application.

Chapter one, "Introducing an Approach to Church Ministry," details the methodology of the study. Bennett began with four questions he sought to answer in Oakland:

---

[101]G. Willis Bennett, "Case Study: An Urban Church Model: Allen Temple Baptist Church," Urban Missions, 5 (September 1987), 30-37.

[102]G. Willis Bennett, Guidelines for Effective Urban Church Ministry: Based on a Case Study of Allen Temple Baptist Church (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1983), p. 2.

1. Who are we as a congregation? Who are we in terms of our theology and our human makeup?

2. Where are we as a congregation? Where are we in terms of historic time and geographic place?

3. What are we doing as a congregation, and how well are we doing it?

4. What ought we to be doing as a congregation and how are we to do it?[103]

These are the same four questions that Bennett was asking before the study and the same ones he teaches students today as a senior professor. The awareness of a church's standing in its community is a hallmark of Bennett's advice. These four questions cover theology, sociology, demographics, history, psychology, needs assessment, vision, and evaluation.

Bennett turns in the next chapter to the theological foundations of Allen Temple. He refers to the concepts of diakonia (servanthood) and koinonia (fellowship) as "doing" and "being." The church has two tasks, that is, to "be" a light to the world and to "do" the tasks of a servant. Allen Temple reflects these two tasks in its constitution. Being and doing is at the heart of what kind of church Allen Temple perceives itself to be. Smith affirms these tasks at every service when he claims that "the gospel will be preached, the afflicted will be comforted, and the invita-

---

[103]Ibid., p. 19.

tion to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will be given."[104]

"Establishing Congregational Identity" is the title of the third chapter and Bennett's next step for church analysis. It is crucial, according to Bennett, to know the history of the church. But to be able to describe the current identity of the church is equally important. Bennett characterizes the geographic setting of urban churches in one of five categories: Downtown, Inner City or Transitional, Stable, Suburban, and Rural-Urban Fringe. Bennett writes that although Allen Temple is in a transitional neighborhood, it is a metropolitan-regional church. Allen Temple conducted a thorough survey of its membership for this book. Questions asked on the survey included education, income, zip code residence, and marital status. All of the data received was compiled by Bennett into a comprehensive report that correctly identified the church.

Once the church looked inward to understand its own membership, Bennett encouraged it to look outward to ministry possibilities in its community. This part of the study necessitated area surveys, agency analyses, interviews, and reconnaissance events. The church discovered that their neighborhood had one of the highest unemployment rates and lowest literacy rates in the nation. The discovery of this

---

[104]Ibid., p. 36.

need helped the congregation to shape its ministries in the future.

The church next developed programs to meet the needs already discovered in the community analysis. The church decided to use its resources to encourage and enhance the public schools, to provide tutoring programs, to provide scholarships to college students, and to develop classes of interest to the community. To respond to the need for housing, the church developed housing for senior adults in partnership with a public agency. To reduce the unemployment and financial mismanagement in the neighborhood, the church began an employment assistance program and a credit union. The church also provided programs for recreation, for counseling, and for political action.

Allen Temple has experienced a significant wave of numerical growth. New facilities and new ministries were needed to sustain the growth of the church and to involve its members in the ministries of the church. Worship was re-designed to provide attenders with a celebration experience. More volunteers were sought to keep established programs fully staffed. Bennett writes that strong pastoral leadership was needed at Allen Temple to motivate the church to keep up the pace of its ministries. Smith is that kind of pastor. Bennett affirms the influential role of the pastor in any church seeking to change and grow. He writes that the qualities of a pastor should be a sense of "call,"

a love for the people, energetic and hard-working, an effective preacher and worship leader, a good administrator, an interesting and effective teacher, a community leader, and a shepherd. Smith is fortunate to be gifted in nearly all of these areas.

The final chapter focuses on the need to build a vision for the local church that includes worship, evangelism, education, fellowship, missions, social action, and ministry. No church has fulfilled all of these tasks; all must strive for them. Being and doing are the twin steeples of a church following Bennett's formulae.

Effective Urban Ministry is significant for Bennett in two ways. First, it is the only book that Bennett wrote other than the Crisis study. One of the regrets of McSwain is that Bennett did not write more. He related that Bennett wrote most of a book on supervision of seminary students during one sabbatical but administrative tasks drew away his attention before it was published. Bennett's influence on future generations would have been enhanced by him leaving more written material behind. Second, this book provides an extensive insight into Bennett's strategy for a church consultation. Many seminary students have read this book since it was published. Through its content, they have gained the benefit of instruction from Bennett and have felt his influence. Cross relates that this book has been widely

read by many SBC urban pastors. Whenever the HMB does a conference, Cross says, this book is present.[105]

Resistance to Bennett's Work

This author is constantly looking for resistance to Bennett's work in the denominational system. Interestingly, one example comes at the conclusion of the ACTS section. Bennett recalls that at the end of one of the first sessions of the ACTS board, a reporter and photographer from the Commercial Appeal, a leading newspaper in Memphis, asked for Bennett to stand with two of his colleagues. The article ran with a photograph of Bennett in the middle, a Roman Catholic monsignor in full regalia on one side, and an African-American bishop on the other side in his regalia.

The following week, seminary president McCall received a copy of that photograph with an angry letter asking, "What is your Bennett up to now?" Bennett recalls that McCall sent the letter and the photograph on to him with the question, "How should I answer this?" Since Bennett was not representing the seminary, McCall could with a clear conscience offer the official seminary denial. Bennett laughs when he recalls, "I guess he used that several times in my case."

Criticism of Bennett for his ecumenical and social work was quite plentiful in those days. While Bennett was

---

[105]Interview with Cross.

campaigning for church involvement with the "negroes," the poor, and those disenfranchised from the "establishment," he recalls a number of letters and comments being made about him. He is aware that McCall must have been receiving a number of these letters, but McCall did not restrict Bennett's work. Bennett remembers a day when McCall came up to him, put his arm around him, and said, "Willis, just remember, sometimes when we are getting the greatest criticism, we are doing the most good." Bennett chuckles as he recalls his response, "Thank you sir. I'll remember that." With McCall's encouragement, Bennett kept on speaking out on those issues he felt were important.

One of the most negative public outcries against Bennett came following a chapter he contributed to Extremism Left and Right.[106] Bennett identified in this chapter the specific groups that were on the fringe on either side. On the left, he named the Communist Party, Maoists, the Black Panthers, the Black Student Union, among others. On the right, he identified several organizations, including the John Birch Society, the Klan, and the Billy James Hargis organization. The Baptist state newspapers discovered this chapter and ran it as a series of articles dealing with extremism. Bennett does not recall any mail from the

---

[106]G. Willis Bennett, "Who's Who among the Extremists" in Extremism Left and Right, ed. Elmer S. West, Jr. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), pp. 44-58.

extreme left, but he received a deluge from those on the right. He says, in fact, that he got more mail dealing with the extremist issue than he ever did dealing with the race issue.

The interview with Allen uncovered another example of resistance to urban ministry. After the 1951 policy change in the relationship between the HMB and the state conventions, the real power moved into the hands of the state directors who requested budgets for their states. The anti-urban bias in states with only one metropolitan area made funding urban projects very difficult. Even though up to one half of a state's population might live in the one area, the smaller, rural churches continued to force policies that restricted the funds to the cities. Allen cites Illinois and the Chicago metropolitan area as a textbook case. State directors, according to Allen, were more likely to invest funds where they would see a financial return on their investment, and that nearly always left the cities out of the picture.[107] Cross says that the denomination's motto seemed to be "money goes where we know we can get it back." Cross calls it a "blatant denial of the mission of Jesus," who gave away what he had without an expectation of a return.[108] The resistance, then, to urban

---

[107]Interview with Allen.

[108]Interview with Cross.

ministry was not always at the national level but often at the state level.

Bullard echoes these sentiments. Ministry in the city is very expensive, especially when compared to similar needs in rural areas. The SBC has taken some aggressive and appropriate steps, according to Bullard, by investing in real estate in several cities. For example, between 1958-62, the SBC invested $750,000 in property at 236 W. 72th street in New York City for the offices of the Metropolitan Baptist Association. That site, Bullard says, became a "beachhead" from which many urban ministries have been and still are being launched. The SBC purchased similar property in San Francisco during that same time period and spent over one million dollars for the site. That facility is now known as the 19th Avenue Baptist Church. Time has proven these were wise decisions, but thirty years ago they were seen as incredibly exorbitant prices to pay for just the property on which to do ministry in the cities. Bullard reports that the resistance to these allocations discouraged similar investments in urban areas so that the openness that allowed the purchase of these facilities was short-lived.[109]

When scarce financial resources were allocated to the cities, Bullard reports that they were often spent unwisely by people who did not understand the urban context

---

[109]Interview with Bullard.

for evangelism. Making sure that everyone "got a piece of the pie" meant some people got money without informed leadership on how to spend it. Consequently, since the denominational financial crunch of 1982-83, there has not been money for the cities, according to Bullard. Bullard cites the example that while Mega-Focus Cities is still a program on the books of the HMB and state conventions, the HMB has not allocated money to do the projects.[110]

But Rose contends that resistance still comes from a convention dominated by the rural mindset. Even though much of the United States is urbanized, forty-seven percent of SBC churches are in rural areas. Most of the leadership of the SBC, according to Rose, grew up in a rural church and still think of church ministry in those terms. He says, "There wasn't anyone out there trying to gun it (urban ministry) down, saying this is wrong, this is bad. But it was the resistance of a mindset of rural people seeing the city as Sodom and Gomorrah."[111] He also believes that the resistance was vocalized most loudly when resources were allocated.

Dale Cross, formerly the director of missions in Detroit and Chicago, is now a pastor in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He says that Bennett has been the prime mover for urban pastoral education in the SBC. Cross

---

[110]Ibid.

[111]Interview with Rose.

relates that when he formed the Urban Evangelism Fellowships on the seminary campuses, Bennett and McSwain were the prime supporters of his ministry.[112]

Cross recalls that Bennett's constant call for community awareness has been a hallmark of his ministry. But, he has also seen first-hand some of the resistance to Bennett's work. He recalls an urban training event in Detroit several years ago where Bennett was speaking on how to understand your community as a context for ministry. A newly converted layman rose to say to Bennett "Mister, I don't have any idea what you are talking about. All I know is I've got to tell somebody about Jesus" and strode out of the meeting. Bennett's comment to the group was that this man would soon be asking for help in designing an evangelism approach for the city. Two years later, Cross remembers, the man was in his office asking for help to plan an evangelism strategy for his church field.[113]

The rural mindset still influences the way the denomination attempts to evangelize the city. Bullard recalls one occasion eight years ago when a staff member from the HMB, leading a conference on urban evangelism in Philadelphia, said that the best way to share the gospel in the southside of Philadelphia was door-to-door evangelism. Bullard was conducting an associational consultation in

---

[112]Interview with Cross.

[113]Ibid.

Philadelphia two months later and was asked the question, "Who was that guy who said we should do door-to-door visitation in South Philly? I give him to the third door before he has a knife in his back."[114] Evidently the rural mindset in evangelism has continued to be promoted from even the denomination's agencies.

A myriad number of streams of influence pass through every human life. Most of those streams leave behind sediment that changes the course of a life. The story of Bennett is a story of a man who built upon the sediment left by others in his life. From his own father who modeled ministry for him in the 1920's, to a pastor-mentor, a devoted wife, a college professor, Baptist Young People's Union (earlier known as the BTU), oratorical societies, on through four pastorates, and years of academic study, Bennett picked up their influence and carried it with him. His life flowed into the lives of countless others, changing their courses in the process. Bennett's gift is the ability to incorporate the best influences in his life and pass them on. His "genius" is the way he takes someone else's ideas and translates them into effective programs in the environment in which he finds himself. This chapter has documented the influence of Bennett on his denomination through his involvement with the various agencies. The next chapter documents his influence on generations of seminary

---

[114]Interview with Bullard.

students who became missionaries of Bennett's unique understanding of church ministry in its community.

Chapter 4

A LIFE OF SERVICE TO THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary has a long history in the study of "Christian Sociology." Charles Spurgeon Gardner joined the faculty at Southern Seminary as professor of Christian sociology in 1909.[1] The author of The Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress[2], Gardner had served as pastor of some of the most influential pulpits in the south, including the First Baptist Church of Greenville, South Carolina. He frequently spoke before the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist World Congress.[3] Henlee Barnette, retired professor of ethics at the seminary, says, "He was a very brilliant man."[4]

---

[1]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Catalog of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1909-10 (Louisville, KY: SBTS, 1909?).

[2]Charles S. Gardner, The Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914).

[3]Ironically, he was never granted a degree of any kind. He finished the course work at two different universities but could not be granted the degree because he lacked the high school diploma.

[4]Statement by Henlee Barnette, retired Professor of Christian Ethics, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, on June 4, 1993.

Gardner's course load included classes in social problems, the development of society, and the application of Christianity to social issues. His classes seem quite modern for the time they were in. For example, in 1918, Gardner offered a course in race relations at Southern Seminary. His classes also included an examination of the welfare agencies in the city of Louisville. Students were required to experience life on the streets of Louisville first-hand.[5] Influenced by Walter Rauschenbush and the social gospel movement, Gardner was especially interested in racial issues. Barnette says,

> He had a rare sense of humor. One day in class a student asked him, "Professor Gardner, do you think negroes go to heaven when they die?" He took off his glasses, took out his handkerchief, polished his glasses, seemingly interminably, and put them back on. And he said "Well, I think they have a better chance than anyone who would ask a question like that."[6]

Barnette says that Gardner was active in the feminist movement related to the suffrage issue, too. He remembers another story of when a student said to Professor Gardner, "Over in my church if I were to let a woman speak in my church, some people would explode." Gardner responded, "Well, that might be a good idea. It might open up some

---

[5]The concept of an "urban plunge," then is certainly not a recent innovation.

[6]Barnette interview, June 4, 1993.

minds."[7] Barnette says that Gardner really is the beginning of the whole social emphasis of the seminary.

Gardner led the seminary to establish the Christian Sociology curriculum as a separate department in 1920. Gardner taught a course in ethics in the fourth quarter of the year as a part of the Christian Sociology department.[8]

J. B. Weatherspoon succeeded Gardner as a professor of Homiletics and Christian Sociology in 1929. Barnette says that Weatherspoon broadened the social interests of Southern Baptists. The 1940-41 catalog of the seminary writes that Christian Sociology was "A major course in the department of Christian Sociology covers the general field of Christian ethics and ideals related to the progress of society and the modern social order." Weatherspoon, that year, taught "Religion and Social Development," "Christianity and Modern Social Movements," and "Race and Race Relations" in addition to the homiletics courses.[9] The department of Ethics was created in 1943-44 as an outgrowth of the Christian Sociology department.[10]

---

[7]Barnette interview, June 3, 1993.

[8]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1920-21 (Louisville, KY: SBTS, 1920?).

[9]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1940-41, (Louisville, KY: SBTS, 1940?).

[10]The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.: 1943-44.

Weatherspoon was also active in the Southern Baptist Convention. The old Social Service Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) had focused mainly on the issue of alcohol consumption. Weatherspoon pushed the agency to expand their interests to include marriage and the family, race relations, economic issues, politics, church-state relations, and other issues.[11]

Olin Trivette (O.T.) Binkley came to the seminary in the 1943-44 academic year from Wake Forest University.[12] With his coming, the departments of Homiletics and Christian Sociology were divided into separate departments.[13] Wayne Oates, retired professor of pastoral care, recalls that Binkley was the "mainstay" of the seminary's interest in ethics and Christian sociology. He had transferred to Southern Seminary while Bennett was serving as a pastor in North Carolina. Bennett, Oates, and Henlee Barnette had studied with Binkley at Wake Forest and Bennett studied under him at the seminary. Although their departments had been officially separated, Binkley and Weatherspoon taught seminars together in social change and social class

---

[11]Barnette interview, June 3, 1993.

[12]The Catalog of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Louisville, KY.: 1943-44.

[13]Barnette interview, June 3, 1993.

structure.[14] Binkley left the seminary in 1952 to assume the presidency of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Oates remembers that Edward A. McDowell, a New Testament professor at Southern Seminary, spent a great deal of time in community service and advocacy in the 1930's and 40's. McDowell was particularly interested in the "race problem" and changing seminary policy to accept black students into the seminary. Kentucky's "Day Law" forbade white and black students in any school from being taught under the same roof. Oates chuckles that "What we (the faculty) did was go and get under their roof with them at Simmons University" and then granted their degrees from the seminary.[15]

Gaines Dobbins, the long-time professor of religious education at the seminary, was interested in the mental health programs of the city, Oates remembers. Robert Proctor, a retired professor of religious education (RE), also recalled that Dobbins was interested in demographic surveys of church communities.[16]

---

[14]Statement by Wayne E. Oates, retired professor of Pastoral Care, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, June 3, 1993.

[15]Ibid.

[16]Statement by Robert Proctor, retired Professor of Religious Education, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, on June 3, 1993.

Oates adds one more factor to the seminary's interest in community ministry. George Stoll, a layman in the city, amassed a fortune in Golden Tip gasoline stations. He formed a committee on institutions under the leadership of the Council of Churches. The committee visited the administration of the seminary to offer their services as a community liaison and influence of change. Oates says, "We were out in the community up to here (pointing to his collar)" by 1950.[17]

Barnette and Binkley taught ethics until Binkley's departure in 1952. Guy Ranson came to the seminary to fill the vacant position in ethics. In 1958-59, Ranson was scheduled to teach a course entitled "Christianity and Culture." The catalog described it as "(an) Historical Christian interpretation of the world, the Church, the State, the family, property, and race."[18] After Ranson left the seminary in 1958, Nolan Howington, yet another homiletics professor, transferred into the ethics department by presidential appointment in February, 1959.[19] The seminary catalog of 1958-59 shows Barnette teaching

---

[17]Oates interview.

[18]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1958-59, (Louisville, KY: SBTS, 1958?), p. 70. He was not present to teach this course, however, due to the resignations of the twelve professors in 1958.

[19]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, [Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], February 3, 1959.

"Christian Ethics 96. Church and Community." The class is described as "a sociological interpretation of rural and urban life in the United States, with particular attention to the role of the churches in southern regions."

Bennett was the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Red Springs, North Carolina. His tenure at Olive Chapel had gained him national recognition and the four years at Red Springs had been gratifying, if not equally visible nationally. Bennett was approached by the faculty in the Spring of 1959 to consider coming back to the seminary as an associate professor of ethics. A large part of the contract was the understanding that he would develop a Church and Community curriculum to be offered in the ethics department.

To consider leaving the pastorate was a difficult decision for the Bennetts. He found the life of a pastor satisfying and he experienced a great deal of status as a denominational leader. Pulpit committees came to his church on a regular basis. Financially, the pastorate afforded a reasonable salary so that Mrs. Bennett could stay at home with the three girls. The churches they had served were generous with their affections as well. These were generally happy years for the Bennetts.

The seminary, however, was not quite so stable. A major division between the faculty and the administration had occurred in 1958, resulting in the loss of twelve professors at one time and a great deal of emotional

upheaval for the entire seminary community. It was not an attractive atmosphere for a successful pastor.

The process of hiring a new faculty member originates with a faculty meeting several months before the agreement is announced. The minutes of the School of Theology faculty meeting on October 6, 1958, reflect President McCall's request for submission of names for the ethics faculty position. Five different names, including Bennett's, were proposed. McCall assigned Barnette the task of collecting biographical information on the nominees.[20] Oates relates that the seminary's main interest in Bennett stemmed from his work at the Olive Chapel church. Bennett's other pastoral experience also commended him to the position. Oates, Howington, and Barnette had also been colleagues of Bennett at both Wake Forest and the seminary.[21]

On January 14, 1959, Barnette nominated Bennett to the "professorship in Christian Ethics in the area of Church and Community." The faculty gave approval to Barnette to bring Bennett onto the campus for an interview.[22] Barnette announced to the faculty on February 19, 1959, that Bennett would be on campus for the faculty interview the week of

---

[20]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], October 6, 1958.

[21]Oates interview.

[22]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting]", January 14, 1959.

March 15.[23] Barnette provides insight as to why Bennett was chosen of the five nominees. He concurs with Oates that it was Bennett's tenure at Olive Chapel that drew the attention of the faculty. Barnette says

> He had all the qualities we were looking for in someone to deal with rural churches. . . . The rural community was a very significant area in Christian ethics. We had Church and Community and rural community courses. Willis had taken these courses with Binkley at the seminary. We really brought him here to work with rural churches.[24]

Bennett says that his first response to the invitation was "lukewarm." He describes the faculty's appeal as "You're not coming into the department to replace anyone who has left. You're coming to develop an area we don't have."[25] In fact, the ethics professor who had left had already been replaced with Howington. Bennett's coming added a third faculty member to the department.

Another enticement for Bennett's move to the seminary was the acceptance of Penrose St. Amant, from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, of the invitation to be the dean of the School of Theology at the seminary.

---

[23]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting]," February 19, 1959. No record is found of the actual visit or of faculty response to Bennett.

[24]Barnette interview.

[25]Statement by George Willis Bennett, Senior Professor of Church and Community, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, on March 11, 1993.

Bennett felt that St. Amant would provide stability to the administration of the school.

Bennett recalls that the night before his faculty interview, while staying in the campus guest house, he decided to let the interview be "at my initiative instead of theirs." In the meeting the next day, he said to the faculty,

> Whether or not I come here depends on what you have to say to me. You're talking about a new area. What do you have in mind for this new area and how do you intend to see it developed?[26]

Bennett now says,

> I let the initiative rest with them and I found out they didn't know (what they wanted in a Church and Community curriculum). And they confessed that they didn't know and that they would have to rely on the person coming to do it. It put them as much on the spot as it did me and I felt more comfortable then because I recognized that I wasn't in over my head.[27]

Eventually an agreement was reached and trustee J.P. Allen nominated Bennett to the Board of Trustees for a three year appointment as associate professor of Christian ethics effective August 1, 1959, for the annual salary of $6,500. The motion was approved.[28]

Mrs. Bennett shared his regret at leaving a healthy pastorate, but she, too, was ready for the new world of a

---

[26]Ibid.

[27]Ibid.

[28]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the Board of Trustees, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary], May 30, 1959."

faculty spouse. The move to Louisville meant a cut in Bennett's salary and Mrs. Bennett would have to work to supplement the family income. She recalls lying in bed the night before Bennett's faculty interview and praying, "Lord, why did you bring Willis here? How are we ever going to live on the money?"[29] Mrs. Bennett, though, quickly gained the position of church secretary at Highland Baptist Church under pastor David Nelson.

Professor of Ethics and Church and Community

The new professor began his work with the question "Where will our graduates go to serve?" His research revealed that in 1960, two-thirds of the students would serve rural churches and one third urban churches. Bennett then developed three elective M.Div. courses: a basic, theoretical Church and Community course with an emphasis on community analysis, a course on rural sociology, and a course on urban sociology. While his courses continued with these three themes early on, Bennett became increasingly invested in the urban side. The 1965 "Crisis" study, which has already been discussed, made him the cause celebre' of many people in the denomination. This section will demonstrate that, while keeping some interest in rural issues, Bennett's primary professorial focus became urban

---

[29]Statement by Caroline Bennett, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, on April 13, 1993.

issues. Another key factor in Bennett's teaching is an emphasis on personal experience as a necessary part of the educational process. Consequently, Bennett's students were required to conduct surveys, do first hand research, and involve themselves in the communities they studied.

The Evolution of the Social Work Program

Duke McCall, then president of Southern Seminary, announced at the faculty meeting on February 2, 1963, that the Board of Trustees of the Woman's Missionary Union had voted to give the endowments and curriculum of the Carver School of Missions and Social Work (formerly the Woman's Missionary Union Training School), located on the southern edge of the seminary campus, to the seminary. The stipulation was that the seminary would continue the Carver programming, including its social work curriculum.[30] Honeycutt relates that the Carver School realized that they could never gain accreditation as a free-standing institution for an M.S.W. degree. The decision of the WMU to give the Carver School, Honeycutt says, meant that the Carver property and school were deeded to the SBC who then deeded the property to the seminary.[31]

---

[30]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the Joint Faculty Meeting of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary], February 2, 1963."

[31]Statement by Roy Lee Honeycutt, President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, on April 22, 1993.

Prior to the founding of the school of religious education on the seminary campus, the Carver School (formerly the WMU Training School) taught the practical courses in religious education. The decision was made to place the curriculum of the Carver School in the religious education (RE) school of the seminary, as opposed to the School of Theology.

Why did the social work program go to the RE school? Proctor relates that a wall divided the RE and the School of Theology faculty. He chuckles when he says that "we were kind of second class citizens. The School of Theology faculty didn't want to get contaminated with anything practical." The Carver school curriculum was welcomed to the RE school by Dean Allen Graves. Proctor says "He was more than willing, he was very happy, enthusiastic about" the curriculum addition. Graves shared McCall's conviction that the purpose of the Carver School should not be lost in the transition. Graves also had a deep conviction about the need for social work in church ministry.[32] Oates says that the seminary's School of Theology was dominated then by "theological purists" who resisted any practical application of theological education. Oates recalls a similar fight he encountered when the attempt was made to place the pastoral care department in the RE school. When the social work program came to the seminary, the same group of professors

---

[32]Proctor interview.

successfully blocked the inclusion of the social work curriculum in theology.[33]

Proctor was on sabbatical leave at the University of Illinois the year that Carver moved into the RE school. Dean Graves asked him to research the social work program at the university. He did so and returned to teach a class in Human Development in 1963-64, the first year social work classes were offered on the seminary campus. Proctor taught the class for three years with the classroom assistance of a medical doctor.[34]

President McCall realized that social work courses and Bennett's Church and Community courses were related. Consequently, at the president's invitation, Bennett was involved in the early planning meetings of the acceptance of the Carver School of Missions and Social Work into the School of Religious Education at the seminary. To prepare himself to direct a social work program, he entered the Master of Social Work (M.S.S.W.) program at the Kent School of Social Work of the University of Louisville in 1962. Bennett used his first sabbatical, 1963-64, to complete the requirements for the M.S.S.W.[35]

During his academic work for the M.S.W., Bennett wrote the syllabi for the first eleven courses in the social

---

[33]Oates interview.

[34]Proctor interview.

[35]Bennett Interview, March 23, 1993.

work program at the seminary. The 1963-64 seminary catalog shows the evidence of his work. In the School of Religious Education, the following courses were offered that year for the first time: SW800 Field Instruction in Social Work; SW801 Social Welfare and the Church; SW805 Social Casework; SW820 Community Organizations; SW821 The Church and the Urban Community; and SW833 Group Process in Social Work. One can also notice that this is the first time that a class with a specific focus on urban issues has shown up in the seminary catalog.[36]

Although Bennett did not teach all of the social work courses, he was responsible for recommending teaching staff to Dean Graves. He says, "We couldn't do now what we did then. We had a Jewish University of Louisville professor teaching casework . . . . I recruited a psychiatrist for a course on mental illness . . . . I recruited a medical doctor for a course on medical social work . . . . (And) I recruited Lowell Lawson for a course in group work."[37]

Proctor recalls some conversation between Bennett and the RE faculty about transferring from the School of Theology to RE but all parties agreed that the former arrangement best fit everyone's interests. The faculty felt that the program head needed to have a more central career

---

[36]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1963-64, (Louisville, KY: SBTS, 1963?), p. 133.

[37]Bennett interview, April 6, 1993.

focus on social work. Walter Delamarter was soon hired by the seminary to head the social work program in the RE school and Bennett returned to his work in the School of Theology.[38]

The School of Theology faculty, however, voted in 1968, upon the recommendation of the School of Theology Credits and Degrees committee, to adopt two proposals relative to the social work curriculum in the School of Theology. Proposal one established the Master of Divinity Degree with a functional major in social work. This degree departed very little from existing M.Div. degrees with functional majors. It added the social work major to the list of approved functional majors so that School of Theology students could take social work classes in the religious education school to complete the M.Div. degree. Proposal two created a joint M.Div./M.S.W. four year degree where students completed the M.Div. at the seminary concurrent with the M.S.W. at the University of Louisville's Kent School of Social Work.[39]

Bennett's Faculty Address

As a newly tenured professor and acting director of

---

[38]Proctor interview.

[39]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], September 9, 1968."

social work education, Bennett delivered his "Faculty Address" on November 8, 1966. The inaugural address is generally viewed as a "manifesto" of a professor's main interest and academic contribution. Bennett's address, "The Church in a Secular Society" certainly reflects his own thinking at the time, as is demonstrated by the subject material of his classes and seminars. The Tie, the seminary's newsmagazine, recorded the event by calling Bennett a "Southern Baptist authority on the inner-city church."[40]

Bennett recalls that the address was an outgrowth of his work in the sociology of religion. He was struggling in the classroom with how to relate religion to society. His thesis was that religion and society should be interlaced so that the two are barely distinguishable. He says, "That was not a common thought, then or now." Bennett built on the metaphor of the Christian and the church being "leaven" in society; once leaven is stirred into dough, it becomes indistinguishable from the dough. If the kingdom is to be fulfilled on earth, Bennett says, then the kingdom should look like society and society should look like the kingdom.

---

[40]The Tie, 32 (January 1967), 3. Ironically, an article on the same page of the tie as Bennett's photograph told of the theme of the student missions conference. "The Cross and the Crossroads" was to emphasize "the new challenges of population explosion, urbanization, and world crises as they relate to the church." The full text of the address can be found in The Review and Expositor, 64 (Summer 1967), 6-29.

In another sense, Bennett saw the address as a defense of the Church and Community department. He hoped to convince his faculty colleagues that a church invested in its community is an indispensable component of the ministry. He felt that many of his colleagues did not yet understand the slant of the department.

Relying on the works of contemporary Christian writers, namely Harvey Cox and Gibson Winter, Bennett hoped to show the interrelationship of the church and the community. Quoting Paul Lehman, Cox had written "a landmark in theological and sociological analysis, an expression of functional theology in action, and a book that should be read and pondered with the utmost seriousness." Cox's book was translated into several foreign languages and read around the world. The themes of secularization, urbanization, theological language, and the world "come-of-age" gained a fresh hearing in the popularity of Cox's book.[41]

Setting the stage for the discussion, Bennett says

> The fullness of time for this idea has come. With population growth and mobility, with continued increase of industrialization and productivity, with expanding urbanization and accelerated transitions, social change is in evidence on every hand . . . . Spectacular evidence of progress in civil rights, before the advent of the so-called "backlash," and the occurrence of intermittent demonstrations showing the inclination of

---

[41]G. Willis Bennett, "Faculty Address: Religion in the Secular City," The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, speech delivered and recorded, November 8, 1966.

> many persons to be involved have raised the hopes of the masses. Shackles of rigidity and fear have begun to fall. All of this may contribute to the readiness of man for a new religious idea.[42]

Cox saw in the civil upheaval of the 1960's an opportunity to speak a fresh religious word to society. According to Bennett, Cox blessed the changes that were coming to American society in the mid-1960's. The sacred causes of God, for Cox, united with the secular purposes of humanity to form one cause, one society. Bennett says that "the fusion of secularization and urbanization (i.e., the secular city) stand for that point where social movement and human initiative intersect, where man (sic) is free not in spite of but because of the social matrix in which he lives."[43]

Drawing on Cox's work as the thesis of his argument, Bennett lays out what he hopes will be his own contribution to the field. He outlines biblical, theological, and historical support for his contention that the interests of God and "the world" should be one and the same. The person of faith cannot ignore the needs of the secular world or as Bennett says it, "That which is Christian is to be found only in that which is in the world, the supernatural only in the natural, the holy only in the profane, and the revelational only in the rational." Later he says that "the

---

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

Church must recognize that the world already belongs to God, whether the world recognizes it or not."[44]

The impetus for the Church and Community department lies in the theological and sociological assertion that the cries of the world are the cries of the church. The fulfillment of the mission of the church can only come in the context of the secular society. At that point, the secular and the sacred become one and the same. Theological education must prepare students to become "salt, light, and leaven" in their respective communities. Or, as graduates now remember Bennett rhetorically challenging them years ago, "Name one thing that is outside the concern of God."

Bennett recalls that to his knowledge, only one person responded critically to his address. Word got back to Bennett that Dale Moody had criticized the address in a public setting. Bennett confronted Moody with "You never discussed it with me, but to someone else. I'd like to hear your comments, so let's debate it." Bennett recalls that Moody was so dumbfounded by the confrontation that they never pursued the debate.[45]

The Founding of the Church and Community Department

The Church and Community department began as

---

[44]Ibid.

[45]Bennett interview, April 6, 1993.

electives in the Ethics department. The 1958-59 catalog, as noted above, listed a course entitled "Christian Ethics (CE) 96. Church and Community." Ironically, the 1959-60 catalog, Bennett's first year on campus, drops it from the list of offered classes. Although Howington had joined the department the previous year, neither he nor Barnette picked up the class. The 1961-62 catalog is the first one to show Bennett associated with specific classes in Church and Community. That year he taught CE91 Christian Ethics; CE95 Sociology of Religion; CE96a Christianity and Contemporary American Society; CE96b Church and Community; CE96c Community Agencies; and 96d The Rural Church. The catalog describes CE96b Church and Community as "A sociological consideration of communities, with emphasis upon types, characteristics, organization and functions, and a study of the role of the church in meeting revealed needs in the community."[46]

Bennett was elected by the School of Theology faculty to the curriculum committee for the year 1962-63. That committee was the perfect vantage point from which he could effect change in the course offerings. The catalog listings for the following year are similar, with the notable addition in Bennett's course load of CE96 The Rural Church. The class is described as "An analysis of problems and needs

---

[46]The Southern Baptist Theolgical Seminary, The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1961-62 (Louisville, KY: SBTS, 1961?), p. 76.

of rural churches, with attention to an adequate program for the church and the role of the pastor."[47] A class focused on urban issues surfaced the next year in the social work curriculum under Bennett's tutelage.

Due to the committee and faculty structure, it was the 1963-64 academic year before Bennett's influence was seen dramatically on the course offerings. The year of 1963-64 was also the first year that students in the School of Theology could claim a major in church social work while earning the M.Div. degree. Bennett taught in both the theology and religious education schools.

The minutes of the School of Theology faculty meeting indicate further changes for which Bennett had pressed. These changes were scheduled for 1964-65, Bennett's first year back from sabbatical. On January 6, 1964, the faculty adopted a motion to change the name of CE96c Community Agencies to CE96c Social Welfare and the Church. CE96d The Rural Church was changed to CE96d The Church in Town and Country. CE96b Church and Community was changed to CE96b Church and Community Action. And the faculty approved a new class, CE96e The Church and the Urban Community, described as "An analysis of problems and needs resulting from urbanization with attention to the social function of the

---

[47]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1962-63 (Louisville, KY: SBTS, 1962?), p. 75.

church." Bennett was the designated faculty member for all of these classes.[48]

Because these classes were somewhat experimental electives and not required for degrees, Bennett had to work to fill the classes with students who were interested in the study. He is proud that his courses showed enough strength to warrant their existence. Oates recalls that Bennett's classes proved to be popular with the students because it spoke to the needs of students who were out working in the community.[49] Later, when he worked as the Director of Field Education (1969-75), Bennett met students that he could personally encourage to take the Church and Community electives. When the curriculum was re-designed, Church and Community courses were added to the required curriculum for School of Theology students.[50]

In the Spring of 1969, Bennett was designated the William Walker Brookes Professor of Church and Community. He assumed the chair that fall. The chair had formerly been used to support visiting professors like Arthur Rutledge and Wendell Belew of the HMB. Bennett being named to this chair coincided with the culmination of work that began in 1968 to

---

[48]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], January 6, 1964."

[49]Oates interview.

[50]Bennett Interview, April 6, 1993.

organize a formal Church and Community department, separate from the Ethics department.[51]

Wayne Ward reported for the Curriculum Committee at the March 31, 1969, meeting of the School of School of Theology faculty. He moved "that Professor Bennett be transferred from Ethics (Theology Division) to the Practical Division in a new department, probably to be called 'Church and Community.'" Later in that same meeting, the faculty approved a motion from the curriculum committee

> That all of Prof. Bennett's courses in the area of Church and Community which are now listed in Ethics be transferred to the new department of "Church and Community" in the Practical Division. These are all elective hours, but the coordination of Field Education by Prof. Bennett will open up those required hours for use in this general area. Agreed.[52]

Bennett remembers that the proposal met with the most resistance from members of the ethics department who saw the change as a loss of strength from their department. Bennett's sociology of religion class also went with him to the new department.[53] Barnette does not recall discussion about the creation of the new department. He says, "It was a fait accomplit. The president and St. Amant wanted it and it was done. I don't remember us being consulted."[54]

---

[51]The Tie, 39 (April-May 1970), 1.

[52]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 31, 1969."

[53]Ibid.

[54]Barnette interview.

A second professor, Larry McSwain, was welcomed to the department in August, 1970.[55] McSwain served in a dual role as professor of Church and Community and assistant director of field education. McSwain says that the creation of the department created a great deal of estrangement between Bennett and the ethics professors. For years, one faculty member in particular was publicly caustic about Bennett.

A typical example of the academic work of this new department is found in a collection of seminar papers prepared by the Ph.D. students in the Church and Community seminar 661 of the Fall, 1970. In the foreward to the bound papers, Bennett writes,

> In recent years the church has been challenged as never before to relate itself to society. If the church is to be able to contribute to the redemption of all of life, its ministry must be designed in the context of that life.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> This study has assumed that a church, working alone or with others, needs answers to certain questions: What are the facts in the social situation? . . . . What do these facts mean? . . . . What are others attempting to do? . . . . What do they think the church should be doing? How can the church design new ministries in light of these findings?
>
> . . . . . .
>
> It (the study) represents the summary of the findings of eight people who believe the city of man can

---

[55]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], August 27, 1970."

> become the city of God, and we challenge others to work with us to bring that hope into realization.[56]

The conclusion of the study, apparently also written by Bennett, provides the reader an insight into Bennett's methodology of community research and program design. The conclusion lists the seven stages of research as follows:

1. Identify human needs in a selected area.
2. Discover basic resources which may be activated to deal with those needs.
3. Decide upon the priorities and rank them.
4. Design a program of action for dealing with need to be treated.
5. Enlist and train necessary leadership for the task.
6. Begin and follow through on the selected action.
7. Evaluate the action, continue, change, and redesign as new situations emerge.[57]

The reader can see that the themes carried through Bennett's work in the denomination, as detailed in Chapter Three, were just as current in his work with students at the seminary. Bennett's keen interest in human need, encouraged by his own study in ethics and fueled by his years in the pastorate, was brought to bear in his graduate students who

---

[56]"A Social Survey of Downtown Louisville and Implications for the Church," seminar papers prepared by graduate students in seminar CC 661 (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, January, 1971). Students participating in the study were Norman Letsinger, Edward Freeman, Roy Jones, Altus Newell, Randall Hilscher, Glenn Saul, Robert Mulkey, and Wallace A. C. Williams.

[57]Ibid.

have picked up the mantle of their professor. One can safely say that Bennett cannot be accused of teaching in the "ivory tower" of academia. He was a professor who dirtied his hands in the needs of a broken humanity and who forced his students to plunge their own hands into that same field.

Bennett continued to push for innovations in the class offerings in the Church and Community department. The School of Theology faculty approved a motion on January 5, 1970, to add the interterm course "The City and the Church" to the curriculum.[58] The 1970-71 catalog lists the following classes under Bennett's instruction in the Church and Community department: CC161 The Church and Community Action; CC162 The City and the Church; CC163 The Church in Town and Country; and SW801 Social Welfare and the Church.[59] The faculty approved CC165 Community Ministry in Metropolis, an on-site experiential class on May 7, 1973.[60]

Bennett as a Teacher

Until Bennett became the Dean of Theology in 1983,

---

[58]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], January 5, 1970."

[59]The Southern Baptist Theolgical Seminary, The Catalog of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1970-71 (Louisville, KY: SBTS, 1970?), p. 65.

[60]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], May 7, 1973."

he continued to teach courses in Church and Community. Bennett supervised his first graduate students in ethics as early as 1966. His first student was a Master of Theology student named Roy Godwin. That thesis was entitled "The Role of the Church in Racial Integration in Urban Areas of Transition" and was signed by Bennett as the chairperson of the committee on September 17, 1966.[61] Several students, namely ethics majors, almost immediately decided to take an area in their doctoral work under Bennett in Church and Community. These students included McSwain, Paul Turner, Glenn Saul, Welton Gaddy, John Dever and Harry Hollis. Eventually, McSwain, Turner, Saul, Dever and a number of others, majored with Bennett. Turner and Saul became Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary professors and McSwain stayed at Southern. Gaddy went to the Christian Life Commission after completing his degree. Dever went to Averett College in Virginia for over twenty years before returning to Southern as a Church and Community professor. Other students went to state conventions, agencies, or

---

[61]Roy Godwin, "The Role of the Church in Racial Integration in Urban Areas of Transition" (Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1967). Bennett's signature actually first occurred on a Th.M. thesis submitted by George Torney on December 17, 1965. Bennett signed the thesis as the second member of the committee. Cf. George A. Torney, "Social and Religious Factors Contributing to the Resurgence of Protestant Religious Interest in Mid-Century America" (Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1965).

significant churches. Bennett says proudly, "We never had any trouble placing a graduate."[62]

The story of one graduate student illustrates the demeanor with which Bennett handled his students. Dever came to the seminary to be a graduate student in ethics with Barnette. Barnette did not have openings for another student and Howington, another ethics professor, became Dever's supervisor. After only a year, Howington returned to the pastorate and Bennett became his supervisor. Dever now says, "That was probably the best thing that ever happened in my life." They enjoyed a good relationship from the beginning. Dever became Bennett's Garrett Fellow for one year. Dever recalls that Bennett gave his graders clear guidance and then trusted their decisions.[63]

Dever says that at least two things are true of his life as a result of his relationship with Bennett. First, Bennett provided Dever with his first introduction to the area of sociology of religion. Dever was so enamored with the topic that he went to the University of Louisville to earn a Master of Arts degree in sociology simultaneously with his graduate work at the seminary. He taught sociology for over twenty years at Averett College and now teaches the

---

[62]Bennett interview, April 6, 1993.

[63]Statement by John P. Dever, Professor of Church and Community, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, on April 13, 1993.

same type classes at the masters and doctoral level at Southern Seminary.

Second, although he had enjoyed success and excellent grades, Dever felt that he never had a great deal of self-confidence. He says, "Willis Bennett was the first teacher I had during graduate studies that made me feel like a person of worth." Bennett was not a teacher that talked down to the students, but he became a "fellow pilgrim" in the learning process. Dever chooses his words carefully when he says (the underscores are the author's to indicate the speaker's inflection), "Willis Bennett was not the best teacher I ever had, but he was the best teacher I ever had." Dever continues, "His classroom teaching was perhaps not as eloquent as Bill Hull's and his preparation was not always as thorough as it could have been, but I came out of his classes wanting to seek further understanding of the subjects covered. He imparted to students a thirst for knowledge."[64]

Dever describes Bennett's personality as "kind" and "cordial." He says that perhaps "warm" would be an overstatement, but he felt that Bennett was always a person to whom he could go to discuss personal problems. The Bennetts welcomed the students into their home on a number of occasions. Dever says, "I will never forget that when I graduated, Willis and Caroline took Marcia and me out to the

---

[64]Ibid.

Luau Room for dinner." McSwain, another graduate student echoes Dever's sentiments. McSwain says that it is quite common for graduate students to lose respect for their major professors over the years of study. But he goes on to say that, to his knowledge, every one of Bennett's students left with a genuine appreciation, even affection, for Bennett.[65]

Dever took two seminars with Bennett: sociology of religion and Church and Community. The sociology of religion seminar was heavily invested in urban Christianity. The seminar began in the works of Wirth and Park, of the "Chicago tradition," and moved into more contemporary writers. In addition to Cox and Winter already mentioned, the reading list for the semester included The Effective City Church, Planning for Protestantism in Urban America, Protestantism in Suburban Life, Urban Church Breakthrough, and The Comfortable Pew.[66]

Although Bennett was, by this time, entrenched in the urban research for Confronting a Crisis, Bennett did not completely lose his rural roots. Dever recalls a particular

---

[65]Statement by Larry L. McSwain, Provost of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, on April 15, 1993.

[66]Murray Howard Leiffer, The Effective City Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury, 1949; Lyle E. Schaller, Planning for Protestantism in Urban America (New York: Abingdon, 1965); Frederick Alexander Shippey, Protestantism in Suburban Life (New York: Abingdon, 1964); Richard E. Moore, Urban Church Breakthrough (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); and Pierre Berton, The Comfortable Pew (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1965).

session in the Church and Community seminar on "The Changing Rural Scene," a topic that Bennett had experienced first hand. Dever says, "Remember that this was in the 60's when a great transition was taking place in rural areas . . . (including) the consolidation of schools, . . . urbanization, the demise of the small communities and more. How do you minister in a changing rural community?" That particular class period left an impression on Dever that has lasted over twenty-five years.[67] Any teacher would be delighted to know that something he or she said a quarter of a century ago is being remembered.

That same Church and Community seminar researched a diverse group of ministries in the Louisville area. Bennett's focus continued to be on understanding the community in which one is ministering. Community surveys and demographic analyses were a constant fixture of their research. A basic function of the church was social ministry, according to Bennett. His emphasis, according to Dever, was always to develop a plan for ministry in the community. That plan was to be reflected in the church's preaching, budget, programs, and so on. But whatever the topic, a familiar theme kept recurring in Bennett's seminars. Dever says in retrospect, "He was so involved in urban sociology and urban ministry that whether we took

---

[67]Dever interview.

Church and Community or sociology of religion, we always found ourselves addressing urban concerns."[68]

Naturally, Bennett significantly influenced Dever's dissertation topic. Having had his interest aroused in a seminar discussion, Dever wrote on "Towards an Ethical Understanding of Leisure in a Technological Society."[69] Bennett had emphasized the coming explosion of leisure time in society and an interest in pursuing the effects of change on churches and society. Dever worked to develop the implications of leisure for the ministry of the church and to develop a theology of leisure that would complement the protestant theory of work. Dever now affirms that the impetus for the dissertation really came in Bennett's class.

Personally, Dever was incredibly impacted by studying with Bennett. First, he carried away from his graduate studies an ability to integrate a scientific discipline with a religious discipline and still maintain integrity in both areas. Dever says, "Throughout the years . . . I have given Willis Bennett the credit for giving me the ability to integrate the two . . . without destroying my faith." Second, Dever feels that Bennett imparted to him self-confidence. He says, "I shall forever be grateful to him

---

[68]Ibid.

[69]John Preston Dever, "Toward an Ethical Understanding of Leisure in a Technological Society" (Th.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968).

for placing his trust in me." When Dever defended his dissertation, Bennett was beside him and helped carry on the discussion when Dever felt as if he stumbled. Bennett was known as a professor who supported his graduate students. Mrs. Bennett reflected on the fact that there was a broad gap between students and faculty members in years past.[70] Dever concurs with her assessment and says, "Bennett was one of those who began to bridge that gap. When I came back to teach, I found a different atmosphere on campus . . . . while it cannot all be attributed to Bennett, he had been dean, provost and I am sure he helped to engender a more open atmosphere." Since Dever returned to the seminary in 1989, he and his wife have enjoyed a social relationship with the Bennetts.[71]

Bennett as a Social Iconoclast

Bennett, especially earlier in his teaching career, became known as an iconoclast. His interest in social issues and his sociological background made him the natural candidate to be an agent of social change at the seminary.

One of the most memorable professorial experiences for Bennett was a semester spent with S.T.D. students studying a contestable issue for the SBC. Having chaired

---

[70]Statement by Caroline Bennett, wife of George Willis Bennett, in an interview with the author at Louisville, Kentucky, on April 13, 1993.

[71]Dever interview.

the faculty committee that recommended a change in the admissions policy to allow for divorced students, Bennett felt a personal commitment to the topic. Regretfully, the faculty rejected the recommendation. Bennett supposes that the faculty was fearful of it as no other SBC seminary was accepting divorced students. He chuckles when he says, "We had a basically very conservative faculty."

But the history of the divorced students issue goes back to Dr. Fuller's tenure as seminary president, which ended with his death in 1950. Fuller asked Oates to work with Hugh Peterson and the admissions committee on admission procedures for divorced students. The problem, Oates says, is that the seminary trained and graduated divorced persons, but churches would not ordain them. Fuller and Oates constructed a plan to raise the awareness of the convention to the dilemma. The seminary adopted a policy to deny admission to divorced students on the grounds that they could not find employment after graduation. Oates says that his, Fuller's, and Peterson's "names were mud." Pastors in the city accused them of being pharisaical. Peterson, on the occasion of addressing Louisville pastors, said, "Oh, you rascals. You're calling us pious when we're calling your hand on being pious. You won't ordain them and you won't place them but you expect us to run them through three years of total frustration." Oates draws the parallel

between the divorced issue in the 1950's and the women in ministry issue today.[72]

In response to the issue of divorced students in the seminary, Hull and Bennett taught an integrative graduate level seminar for all S.T.D. students every year. Hull came up with the idea for the seminar of Fall, 1967, to focus on the topic of divorce. They decided to assign students papers on marriage, divorce, and remarriage among ministers from biblical, sociological, theological, and historical perspectives. The seminar conducted written surveys among SBC agencies and divorced ministers to learn of their personal experience. The result of the seminar was that Oates constructed new criteria for divorced students applying for admission to the seminary. That policy was adopted and is in place to this day.[73]

That same faculty committee in previous years had issued an invitation to Martin Luther King, Jr. to appear in the seminary's chapel on April 19, 1961. One of the most interesting parts of that visit was an event that never made the newspapers. King was invited by the mayor and the alderman to meet privately with them to discuss the racial climate in Louisville. Bennett and a few other seminary

---

[72]Oates interview.

[73]The collective papers of that seminar are bound and on file in the seminary's library. See "Divorce in the Christian Ministry," STD 500 Correlation Seminar Papers, Fall, 1967.

personnel were invited to accompany King in his limousine to the meeting and to sit in on the meeting with the city officials. King established a relationship that day with Louisville's elected leadership and he returned on occasion to consult with those leaders. That day has remained a high point in Bennett's life for over thirty years. On another occasion, Bennett joined with at least three other seminary professors to march with King at the state capital in Frankfort. Civil rights legislation was the target of that particular march.[74]

Concurrent with the interaction with King, the Home Mission Board called on Bennett to speak on behalf of civil rights issues around the country. He particularly remembers being met in Mississippi by a delegation informing him that it was not safe for him to speak to a gathering of African-Americans. He was ushered in one door and out another. Another interesting week was spent lecturing at an African-American seminary in Atlanta. Bennett vividly remembers being the only anglo face on campus during that entire week. While he was there, the Klan rallied on the edge of the campus.

Another significant semester for Bennett and his students was Fall, 1965. The Christian Ethics 596 seminar decided to focus on the social welfare ministries of organized religious groups in Louisville. Students like

---

[74]G. W. Bennett interview, March 11, 1993.

Godwin, Rembert S. Truluck, Harry Hollis, James Sorrell, William Weedman, and Dever contributed papers detailing the specific actions of religious organizations for social improvement. Tracing the Jewish, Catholic, Baptist, and Council of Churches involvement with Louisville's poor provided for the students an eye-opening experience with the networking of social agencies. This perspective on networking has continued in Bennett's thought to the present.[75]

Bennett as a Seminary Administrator

Bennett came to the seminary to teach, but soon his skills as an administrator came to light. Perhaps his most significant contributions to the seminary came through his work in administrative roles. In fact, several generations of seminary students were exposed to Bennett only through his administrative work.

Director of Field Education (1969-75)

Bennett's first election to a chairmanship of a faculty committee was as Chairman of the Credits and Degrees Committee of the School of Theology faculty on May 4, 1964,

---

[75]"Social Welfare Ministries of Organized Religious Groups in Louisville, KY, unpublished seminar papers for Christian Ethics 596 Church and Community (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, 1965). Bennett's emphasis on networking is still vital. The author lectured on this very topic at Bennett's request for his M.Div. class in the spring of 1992.

for the academic year 1964-65.[76] The following year, Bennett was elected by the School of Theology faculty to the field education committee for the term 1965-67. As a member of this committee, Bennett helped to prepare an inter-office document entitled "A Proposed Field Education Program for School of Theology Students, For Presentation at the School of Theology Faculty Meeting February 7, 1966."[77] The faculty had accepted a report from the curriculum committee the previous September that was critical of the ministerial experiences of seminary students. That curriculum committee was composed of Joseph Calloway as the chairperson and Glenn Hinson, Swan Haworth, and Bennett. Their report was based on a research project that Bennett conducted with students who graduated from the seminary in 1960-64. As far as I can tell, this was Bennett's first major research project on behalf of the seminary.

The field education report adopted in February, 1966, called for every student in the seminary to participate in "some form of religious activity" during five semesters of his B.D. work. Two courses of two hours each were developed to give students a framework to evaluate their field

---

[76]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], May 4, 1964."

[77]"A Proposed Field Education Program for School of Theology Students, for Presentation at the School of Theology Faculty meeting, January 31, 1966," Inter-Office Correspondence located in the "[Minutes of the Theology Faculty Meeting], February 7, 1966."

experiences. The report called for the inauguration of the program in the fall of 1966 with the senior students assigned to Bennett.[78] The next month, Bennett and Samuel (Sim) Southard were assigned the field work education program by the School of Theology faculty.[79] A month later, the faculty voted to postpone the inauguration of the field work program until the fall of 1967.[80]

The retirement of Joseph Stiles from the office of Director of Field Education in 1969 provided Bennett his first opportunity to enter a full-fledged administrative role. Dean Penrose St. Amant announced Bennett's appointment to the post of director of field education at the School of Theology faculty meeting of February 3, 1969.[81] At the March School of Theology faculty meeting, as has already been indicated, St. Amant announced that the School of Theology was being reorganized from four divisions to three. The new divisions were Biblical, historical-theological, and practical. Bennett would be reassigned to

---

[78]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], February 7, 1966."

[79]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 7, 1966."

[80]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], April 4, 1966."

[81]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], February 3, 1969."

the Practical Division from the Theological Division due to his work in field education. The ethics department was assigned to the historical-theological. The shift was significant because it meant that Bennett was then in a different division from the ethics department. This was also one more step for the new Church and Community department away from its roots in ethics.[82]

Bennett's office was responsible for the field supervision of over 1,400 students in 125 churches and institutions.[83] On May 25, 1970, Bennett replaced Haworth as the chair of the field education committee, a post Bennett held for several years.[84] From 1970, Bennett used every faculty meeting opportunity to promote the work of the field education office. The minutes of the School of Theology faculty meetings reveal that Bennett made a report, usually an extensive one, at every meeting. While many committees often said "no report," Bennett made sure to present one. Lengthy reports from the field work office were made by others, usually McSwain, when Bennett was absent. I found only one faculty meeting in which he was present where Bennett did not report on field education.

---

[82]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 3, 1969."

[83]The Tie, 38 (March 1969), 4.

[84]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], May 25, 1970."

From 1970-75, a detailed report of the field education requirements for a different functional major was presented at nearly every meeting. The length and frequency of reports noticeably declined after 1975.

Bennett presented a roster of students each semester to the School of Theology faculty who had satisfied the field education requirement and were cleared to graduate. A typical example can be found in the School of Theology faculty minutes of December 7, 1970.[85] In this way, Bennett was able to keep the field education component of the degree visible to the faculty and over a period of time, enhance the value placed on the program. The same December, 1970, report also mentioned that a field education supervisor, Carman Sharp, a local pastor, was being asked to represent the field supervisors on the Field Education Committee.[86]

Bennett's role as Director of Field Education afforded him the privilege of personal contact with many students. Consequently, his name showed up as a reference on countless resumes and applications. From this position, Bennett was able to assist students with their first ministerial placement. The selection of Bennett seems also to have pleased the faculty. In their annual letter to trustees in

---

[85]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], December 7, 1970."

[86]Ibid.

1969, the faculty wrote, "The selection of Dr. G. Willis Bennett as the new Director of Field Education has been a wise one, and we look forward to his positive and creative leadership in the post."[87]

The School of Theology faculty approved the admission of the D.Min. degree at their meeting on April 5, 1971.[88]The Board of Trustees approved the degree on April 21, 1971.[89] The field supervision for the D.Min. degree was added to the field work office in March, 1972, by the School of Theology faculty. Bennett canceled a full sabbatical for 1972-73 in favor of a half sabbatical. The one half of the year he planned to spend away was spent in the office at the seminary preparing the field work component for the D.Min. degree. The assignment also meant the development of a training/certification program for D.Min. field supervisors.[90]

It was also in this role that Bennett brought McSwain into his first professional capacity with the seminary as

---

[87]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 31, 1969."

[88]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], April 5, 1971."

[89]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the Board of Trustees], April 21, 1971."

[90]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 6, 1972."

Associate Director of Field Education and an assistant professor in the Church and Community department. McSwain studied with Bennett as a graduate student, but since that time McSwain has served the seminary in the field education office, the classroom as a professor of Church and Community, as dean of the School of Theology, and most recently as provost. As of this writing, McSwain has announced his resignation to assume the presidency of Shorter College, Rome, Georgia. McSwain's relationship with Bennett has been a very unique one. He says that in one sense, "I am the son he never had." And, since McSwain's own father died quite early, Bennett has become a father figure. McSwain says, "He has been my strongest supporter and my strongest recommender."[91]

The relationship began through a series of mishaps. Graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, McSwain had an interest in ethics, mainly due to the influence of his ethics professor, William Pinson. McSwain interviewed with Barnette at Southern to be one of his students and he was accepted into the S.T.D. program. But when he arrived, he learned that Barnette did not have an opening for another student. McSwain's supervision was transferred to Howington. After a year with Howington, he announced that he was returning to the pastorate. For the second time, McSwain was without a supervisor.

---

[91]McSwain interview.

This time, McSwain was referred to Bennett. After an interview with Bennett, in which Bennett laid out his teaching fields and academic interests, McSwain became one of Bennett's graduate students and he took the Sociology of Religion and Church and Community seminars. McSwain soon discovered that Bennett's course material exactly matched his own interests.

McSwain relates that the graduate student colloquium was always a positive experience for Bennett's students. It was fun and never tedious. McSwain says that the primary reasons Bennett was such a good teacher were that he cared about the students and had a good sense of humor. He was enthusiastic and he told lots of stories about his own involvement in the community. Bennett had stayed connected with the Louisville community through the United Way.[92]

The field education office included student and alumni placement. Bennett usually handled the alumni and McSwain the students. Bennett carried the D.Min. supervision and McSwain the M.Div. supervision. In fact, their offices were next door to each other. From 1969-1975, Bennett and McSwain worked together every day. McSwain says, "In that close working relationship, I can honestly

---

[92]Bennett served on the Board of Directors of the United Way for over a decade from the mid-1960's to the mid-70's. He was Vice President of the Board for three years. In that office, Bennett chaired the annual budget committee, which is responsible for receiving and processing fund allocation requests.

say that he never lost his cool toward me or any individual in his office. But every time something came on the floor of the faculty, he would lose his cool in fighting for it." McSwain laughs to realize that, "I developed some of that style myself, which I am sure I learned from him."[93]

But they developed widely different styles in other areas of their professional lives. McSwain says,

> Inevitably, Willis did everything at the last minute. I always tried to do it at least a day before it was due. If Willis had a speech to give at the HMB, he would wait until the night before to write it, working until 1 or 2 o'clock to finish it . . . . He would dictate dozens of letters at a time until 2 o'clock in the morning. He always worked against tight deadlines. Our style was quite different at that point. I was much more structured than he. Part of that was a maturity factor. I didn't know enough about what I was doing. I do more of that style now.[94]

McSwain decided in 1975 to resign from the field education office and to move to the classroom full-time. He cites a "burn-out factor" as the main reason for the change. McSwain was already teaching eighteen hours a year and coordinating continuing education, field education, and alumni placement. During Bennett's 1973 sabbatical at Union Seminary, McSwain carried the entire office responsibilities. Both Bennett and McSwain were working seventy to eighty hours a week for those five years, including teaching full schedules. McSwain says, "When Willis was in his fifties, I could never keep up with him when I was in my

---

[93]McSwain interview.

[94]Ibid.

thirties."[95] Regarding Bennett's contribution to the field education program at Southern Seminary, Honeycutt says, "You can look at the whole program of supervision here. It's been enhanced by others, but that really is a Willis Bennett program."[96]

Because the Church and Community department was an innovation in the seminary and the SBC and because of his role in alumni placement, Bennett gained a great deal of influence in placing students. Bennett cites one example of his influence in student placement. Foy Valentine, executive-secretary of the Christian Life Commission (CLC) of the SBC, and Bennett became close personal friends. So close, in fact, that Valentine trusted Bennett's judgment completely. Bennett often consulted with Valentine at the CLC, taught workshops at the conference centers, and represented the CLC on a number of occasions. One of Bennett's students, David Sapp, was employed with the seminary at the end of his graduate study. A church was pressing Sapp to be their pastor at the same time that he was being considered for a position at the CLC. Bennett knew that Sapp preferred the CLC position, but that he was unwilling to decline the church position until the CLC made a formal offer. Bennett tracked Valentine down at an out-

---

[95]McSwain interview.

[96]Honeycutt interview.

of-town meeting and called him out of that meeting for a conversation. Bennett recalls the conversation,

> Foy, I know that you have been considering David Sapp. I want to tell you that you need to call him before midnight tonight and get that cinched so that he will wait for you. Otherwise, he is going to accept a church. If you still want him, you've waited long enough, you should know by now whether you want him or not. If you do want him, call him.

Bennett says that Valentine called and Sapp got the job at the CLC. Similar conversations were conducted on behalf of other students between Bennett and agency heads throughout the SBC, including Jere Allen, Ray Dalton, and George Bullard at the Home Mission Board.[97]

Director of Professional Studies (1975-80)

Bennett presented a joint recommendation from the Curriculum Committee and the Credits and Degrees Committee of the School of Theology to the School of Theology faculty on March 30, 1970, that recommended the establishment of a Professional Studies Committee and the position of Director of Professional Studies. The faculty approved the motion and gave the position the power to recruit student candidates for first level degree programs; advise students

---

[97]G. W. Bennett interview, April 6, 1993.

in first level degree programs; and set the academic calendar for these degrees.[98]

Five years later, Dean William E. Hull asked Bennett to fill that role. Russell Bennett, coming from the HMB, was hired to replace Bennett in the field education office.[99] The Professional Studies office was, by this time, also responsible for the D.Min. degree program. Bennett and Wayne Oates were given primary responsibility for the organization of the D.Min. program in 1973. Oates designed the seminar side of the program and Bennett wrote the field experience side.

Bennett was very optimistic about the future of the D.Min. program. This role gave the director a chance to guide the academic work of ministers already serving in the field. He was drawn to the professional training side of the program. Bennett says proudly that ATS, the accrediting agency for theological education, often referred other schools to Southern to see a model D.Min. program in action.

One controversy that flared in the School of Theology Faculty meetings in 1975 was the discussion regarding off-campus D.Min. sites. On August 25, 1975, Bennett reported for the Advanced Professional Committee a request

---

[98]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 30, 1970."

[99]The Tie, 44 (May-June 1975), 4.

> That the School of Theology Faculty look with favor upon instituting a program of off-campus modules for the Doctor of Ministry degree, and that the Dean of the School of Theology and the Director of Advanced Professional Studies be authorized to explore the feasibility of such study in specific locations.[100]

The minutes record that "There was much discussion on this matter." After considerable debate, the faculty seemed poised merely to "investigate the matter." The minutes indicate that "Dr. Bennett stated that there was no more investigation he could do on this if the faculty was not in favor of it." Bennett adds that the resistance came from professors who felt that attending seminars off the campus decreased the quality of education the student received. Bennett argued that "if you are teaching the same class, using the same syllabus, taking the same amount of time, and using the same professor, why should a room at a church make a difference?" The tension lessened, Bennett says, when he agreed to require at least one of the seminars be taken on the seminary campus.[101] The minutes indicate that the motion passed for the faculty to "look with favor upon designing and instituting" the off-campus D.Min. degree.[102] The minutes do not indicate the vote, however. Bennett relates that the vote came up with a tie. Dean Honeycutt

---

[100]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], August 25, 1975."

[101]G. W. Bennett interview, June 3, 1993.

[102]Ibid.

immediately voted "aye." He says that Honeycutt had been silent on the issue to that point and let Bennett carry the load for advocacy. After Honeycutt's vote, there was no question concerning Honeycutt's position.

But the November 11, 1975, School of Theology Faculty meeting indicated that the controversy was still raging. The Advanced Professional Studies Committee brought a report that indicates that the "Advanced Professional Studies Committee takes very seriously the divided opinion of the Faculty of the School of Theology regarding off-campus D.Min. studies." In this report, the committee codified the on-campus requirement for one seminar.[103] The opportunity to teach a seminar at an off-campus site meant extra remuneration, a chance to travel, and exposure to a different part of the country for the seminary professor sent to teach. Bennett made it clear that he would not send anyone to teach who spoke negatively about the program. After that, he says, he never heard a word against the program.[104]

During the time that Bennett served in this office, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. It was awarded at a banquet in Nashville on

---

[103]The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY, "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], November 2, 1975."

[104]G. W. Bennett interview, June 3, 1993.

September 16, 1980. His accomplishments listed with the program for the awards presentation included chairman of the board of directors of the Center for Urban Church Studies and a member of the board of directors of Paul's Workshop and the Family and Children's Agency of Louisville. Valentine and CLC board chairman John Claypool made the presentation and the address was given by Donald Shriver, president of Union Seminary in New York City.[105]

Director of Graduate Studies (1980-83)

Bennett became the Director of Graduate Studies in 1980, taking the D.Min. degree with him. This office supervised the Master of Theology (Th.M.), D.Min., and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees.

Bennett responded to the provost who issued the invitation to Bennett to serve in this capacity with a condition. He wanted assurance that he would have the freedom to administer the office in such a way that he would not be an administrator of rules and regulations, but be able to respond individually to the needs of students. He remembers saying, "If you want someone to administer the rules, then you do that through a computer. You don't need

---

[105]The Tie, 49 (October 1980), 8. A profile of Bennett in the March edition of The Tie that same year listed the following personal items about Bennett: Favorite biblical book--the Psalms; Favorite Scripture verse--Philippians 2:5-11; Favorite music--semi-classical; Favorite color--rust; Hobbies--travel, photography, and hiking with dog; Favorite vacation spot--Outer Banks, North Carolina.

me. But if I can personalize the office, I will be glad to accept the responsibility."[106] With that freedom in hand, Bennett felt able to change the reputation of the office to one that helped students rather than being a "figure head."

The Tie noted in an article announcing Bennett's promotion to dean that in 1979, the graduate studies office had supervised 141 Ph.D. students and 216 D.Min. students, making the program one of the largest doctoral programs of its type in the nation. A study conducted by the American Council of Learned Societies before Bennett assumed the leadership of the program listed Southern's Ph.D. program as one of the premier programs of its kind, along with Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Duke, and Vanderbilt.[107]

Dean of School of Theology (1983-88)

The invitation to serve the seminary as dean came from Provost Honeycutt to Bennett on the afternoon that Dean Shurden announced his resignation. By the next morning, Bennett was ready with a response, "If you can let me have the freedom to administer the school the way I see fit, I will accept the offer." Honeycutt wrote those terms into the contract and they enjoyed a very close, trusting relationship that has continued to this day.[108] Regarding

---

[106]Bennett interview, April 6, 1993.

[107]The Tie, 52 (November 1983), 4.

[108]Bennett interview, April 6, 1993.

the speed with which Bennett responded to the invitation, Honeycutt says, "He is the kind of person who can give you a quick decision on something; it doesn't take him all day to make decisions."[109]

Honeycutt's decision to approach Bennett with the position was one that he had already considered. Honeycutt cites his efficiency, his administrative style, his ability to get along with colleagues, and his leadership skills in the sense of being "dynamic" or "out ahead with ideas" as qualifications for his candidacy. All of these qualities, says Honeycutt, make an outstanding dean. "And," he says, "that proved to be the case."[110]

The Tie called Bennett "the noted missions strategist" when it announced his selection. The article noted that assisting Bennett would be J.J. Owens, chairperson of the Ph.D./Th.M. committee, Bryant Hicks, chairperson of the D.Min. committee, and Walter Jackson as field supervisor for D.Min. students.[111]

Bennett's first and most important task was to fill the many open positions in the faculty. In August, 1983, Bennett promised Honeycutt that the positions would be filled at the April, 1984, trustee meeting. He recalls that "We had people coming and going all year long," but the nine

---

[109]Honeycutt interview.

[110]Ibid.

[111]The Tie, 52 (November 1983), 4.

positions were indeed filled in April. The next step was to integrate these new faculty members into an existing, institutionalized faculty. He chuckles now to remember saying to the faculty

> Every year I must make a judgment about which twenty-five percent of this faculty will get merit raises. You deserve to know in advance the criteria I will use . . . . (The criteria include) the faculty member who has gone beyond the realm of duty to welcome the nine new-comers and to integrate them into this school

will be more likely to receive the merit raises. He says, "I bought their loyalty."[112]

Bennett had been teaching classes since 1959. Even after becoming dean, he carried a significant classload. McSwain relates that by 1985, the stress of teaching, administration, and the denominational pressures were taking a toll on Bennett. The fatigue evidenced in Bennett, the ultimate gentleman and professor, when he would occasionally lose his temper in class.[113] Bennett says "When I am well prepared, I enjoy teaching as much as anything that I do." But he is the first person to admit that administrative duties meant that preparation sometimes took a back seat. Bennett, in fact, also enjoyed administration. Being in a role that sees how things are done and can make them happen has always been satisfying.[114] Consequently, Bennett gave

---

[112]Bennett interview, April 6, 1993.

[113]McSwain interview.

[114]Bennett Interview, April 6, 1993.

up classroom responsibilities in 1985, until reassuming them as senior professor after his retirement in 1991.

One of the most difficult parts of his years as dean were the interactions with the SBC. The decade of the 1980's were the years of great tumult for Southern Baptist theological education. The SBC-elected "Peace Committee" reviewed the seminary following the complaints of Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis and a key architect of the fundamentalist resurgence in the SBC. Rogers was also a member of the sub-committee of the SBC "Peace Committee" that visited the campus. He raised opposition to thirteen faculty members, including the president. Honeycutt and the seminary trustees treated each of those complaints as formal charges against the faculty members. Each of them had to be cleared of the charge or dismissed from the seminary. All of the professors were in the School of Theology. Bennett was given the task of submitting a written report about each of the twelve professors while the trustee personnel committee dealt with the president. He reports that he spent most of a year investigating the writings and teachings of each professor under attack. The final report went to the president's desk and then on to the trustees. All thirteen faculty members were exonerated. Bennett is rightly proud of the fact that he helped hold the faculty together through those years.

New professors were added and departments were strengthened, even in the midst of turmoil.

Bennett is proud of some other accomplishments. The agreement of the faculty to invite very conservative scholars along with more mainline scholars for lectureships was one of those accomplishments. That required careful and discreet handling of the faculty. The trustees were pleased and the faculty was surprisingly pleased with the quality of academic work produced by these scholars. In fact, David Dockery, one of those brought in as a conservative scholar is now the Dean of Theology. Ironically, he became the choice of the faculty to be the dean.

Seminary Provost, 1987-91

The provost is the highest academic officer in the institution. He is responsible only to the president and personally supervises all of the deans. When Honeycutt became seminary president, he was serving as the provost. Rather than designating a successor for that role, Honeycutt took the office of the provost with him to the presidency. Honeycutt says regarding that decision, "I might have moved on the provost earlier, except that, in my own case coming from within the institution's faculty, I felt one of the strong foundations I had was the sense of collegial relationship I had with the community."[115]

---

[115]Honeycutt interview.

Four years into his presidency, outside responsibilities in the denomination and fund-raising were taking more and more of his time. The president's frequent absences from the campus indicated the need to have someone on campus to provide hands-on supervision. Bennett was invited to add the role of provost to his deanship and for one year (1987-88) Bennett served in the dual role. Honeycutt adds, "Willis was the logical choice to be provost. There was nothing political in it. It was sheer ability."[116]

At the end of that year, it became evident that the task was insurmountable. The decision was made then to name a new dean while Bennett retained the office of provost. McSwain, one of Bennett's most outstanding graduate students, was named dean of theology in 1988.

During the years as provost, Bennett was called on to fill a unique role. Originally slated to serve as acting president for three weeks while Honeycutt was overseas, plans were altered when it was discovered that Honeycutt required open-heart surgery. In one afternoon, with only a phone call from the president in his hospital bed, Bennett was named acting president of the seminary.

Honeycutt was absent for three months. The most threatening stress factor of that period was one of the most hostile trustee meetings of the decade-long crisis. It was

---

[116]Ibid.

at the fall trustee meeting that Bennett was called on to defend Honeycutt to trustees threatening to terminate him. The afternoon session began with a move to apply the tenets of the Peace Committee report to all seminary appointments, including the president. The evening session dealt with a response to charges against three professors and the president. That particular session lasted until 2:30 a.m. and ended with a press conference. No one was terminated through those arduous late-night, early-morning negotiations.

The stress levels continued when the accrediting agencies decided to follow-up the trustee meeting with a review. Those negotiations were also successful.

Retirement: 1991 and Beyond

Already two years past his own retirement target date, Bennett decided to step aside at the age of seventy-two. The president reluctantly accepted Bennett's resignation. McSwain was named to the office of the provost and Dockery returned from Nashville to accept the deanship.

Bennett continues to enjoy a relationship with the seminary as Senior Professor of Church and Community. He has returned to the classroom for three hours each semester to instruct M.Div. students in the field he himself created at Southern Seminary.

The Bennetts continue to travel extensively, visit their grandchildren, and enjoy good health. He now finds more time to garden and attend University of Louisville basketball games. Mrs. Bennett retired from teaching business education at Shawnee High School in Louisville in 1986. They seem to be contented with the life they share and their years as a couple committed to ministry.

Bennett's Legacy to the Seminary

When Dever is asked, "What will be the legacy that Bennett leaves behind at Southern Seminary?" he replies

> I think that it would be the ability that Southern Seminary has to take the social gospel and the evangelism gospel and recombine them into the one gospel proclaimed by Jesus. Willis Bennett has contributed as much to that understanding as anybody.[117]

Oates has been a friend and colleague of Bennett for over fifty years. When I asked him, "What will Willis Bennett be remembered for at Southern Seminary?," he replied, "Willis ran the political gauntlet of the faculty to establish a new program . . . in Church and Community." Oates empathizes with Bennett because he walked the same road to establish the pastoral care department. Oates says, "You take a beating with the faculty . . . . I think he had an easier time because he came in after the resignations" in 1958. Oates calls those twelve professors the "body of

---

[117]Dever interview.

divinity folks." They had a very strict definition of what that body of divinity should be. They believed that the seminary's role was to teach theology alone. As Oates relates, "A person was supposed to have common sense enough to handle social problems, counseling problems, and so on." Oates believes that Bennett did not have the open conflict with other faculty members that he experienced because Bennett was more politically minded. Oates says, "He was more gracious with them . . . . I was more pugilistic than he was."[118]

Bennett will also be remembered for his work in field education, according to Oates. He says, "The field education was kind of a joke to students." Oates is convinced that the former attitude toward theological education among the faculty reduced its importance in the eyes of both faculty and students.[119]

Oates reflects that, from his observation point at the University of Louisville School of Medicine, Bennett became a very effective buffer between McCall and the faculty in administrative matters. He says, "I could see that he had entered into his real talents as an administrator. Those talents served him well in establishing the Church and Community department . . . . He

---

[118]Oates interview.

[119]Ibid.

had the good ear of Duke McCall . . . . He worked smoothly with McCall and Bill Hull."[120]

Honeycutt, when asked the same question, says,

> When one assesses Bennett's contribution to Southern Seminary, one might think of him as provost and dean, because he served so effectively and so recently. Or think of him just in Church and Community . . . . (It is) to the credit of Willis Bennett, that Church and Community became here a full-blown discipline with faculty under his leadership . . . . (and) It ought to be put in the record that he really was the person who brought about social work on this campus.[121]

Honeycutt cites Southern Seminary's accredited M.S.W. program as the only one of its kind in the nation. "It was Willis Bennett," says Honeycutt, "who got that moving."[122] Bennett was also the key figure who connected the work of the seminary to the Home Mission Board. Bennett and Honeycutt shared a chuckle when a newly-elected trustee in the early 1980's, being critical of the seminary, said "What you people ought to do at Southern is this new program at the HMB." The trustee was referring to the Mega-Focus Cities program, a program helped significantly by a day-long meeting with Bennett and McSwain in a Southern classroom.[123]

Honeycutt carefully words his final analysis of Bennett,

---

[120]Ibid.

[121]Honeycutt interview.

[122]Ibid.

[123]Ibid.

If you compared him with other members of the faculty, not in an invidious or negative way, I don't know that you would find any person . . . not only in this generation but in the history of the seminary, who has had such a multi-faceted impact on such a variety of areas . . . someone who came out of a classical theological background, who came into an ethics department, who developed all these other emphases . . . . A history of the school written properly would include Willis Bennett among those giant figures."[124]

---

[124]Ibid.

Chapter 5

A SYSTEMS INTERPRETATION: BENNETT AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE

Chapter two of this dissertation discussed a systems model of change as theorized by Smelser. Chapters three and four discussed the events and involvements of the life of Bennett. This chapter interprets the life of Bennett using the systems model to explore the question "How has Bennett brought change to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)?" The chapter ends with a theological reflection on the life of Bennett and his role in the kingdom of God.

The Systems in the Life of Bennett

Smelser writes that a social structure has to have both "regularities," that is repeated, non-random action, and "systematic relationships," meaning connections between social functions. These processes provide structural differentiation in a definable sequence.[1] The socio-institutional life of Southern Baptists and the involvement of Bennett in the process of building, changing, and

---

[1]Neil Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An Application of Theory to the British Cotton Industry (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959). pp. 3-4.

managing the processes that form the boundaries of the Southern Baptist subsystem certainly can be traced through repeated social processes. The processes in modern Southern Baptist life manage, drive, and control a multitude of persons, from denominational employees to volunteers in local Baptist churches who use the materials produced by the SBC. Baptist history is filled with events that follow repeated processes, whatever the issue or whoever the players. Individually, Bennett has been a key player at several levels of SBC life. His roles as pastor, professor, student, consultant, supervisor, and personal advocate have given him prime opportunities to influence the action of the denominational system. Most of these social roles can be spoken of as being concentric in the sense that one social subsystem may be said to be contained within a larger one, which is contained in a larger one, and so on.

Those systems that are not wholly contained by another almost certainly overlap with other systems. These systems repeat actions that are identifiable, recognizable, and predictable. They require regular amounts of "input" and they each produce "output" that is sent back into the larger system. Smelser writes,

> . . . The system maintains certain relationships with its external situation. We use the concept of boundary relationship to characterize these external relationships. With its environment the social system exchanges performances and sanctions . . . . By means of these interchanges it obtains the resources necessary

for its own functioning and supplies resources for other systems of action.[2]

In the broad context, or system, of American religion the SBC is but one of many subsystems. But the SBC contributes processes that help the system to fulfill all four of the major functions of latent pattern maintenance, goal attainment, adaptation, and integration. The output of the SBC feeds other systems and the output of other systems infiltrate the SBC. This dynamic relationship provides for constant interaction between any given system and its environment.

The vertical axis, which Parsons calls the "internal-external axis," connects a given system externally to the larger systems in which it is located and internally to the subsystems that direct the system's processes.[3] In latent pattern maintenance (L), the SBC has helped to define the evangelical protestant subculture, especially in the south. Baptist churches have often provided the cultural boundaries of communities, especially those in rural areas and small towns. The absence of southern protestant cultural boundaries in the urban centers of the United States was already noticed by the SBC prior to Bennett's

---

[2]Ibid., pp. 19-20.

[3]Talcott Parsons and Gerald M. Platt, The American University (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), p. 8.

Crisis[4] study. The lack of cultural influence in the cities has already been shown to have been the prime motivation for the allocation of funds by the HMB to conduct the study. Southern Baptists were losing entire churches in the cities. The "crisis" for the SBC was the loss of churches and financial resources.

It is not rare, of course, for religious groups to exert significant influences on American culture. The Puritans, the Congregationalists, and the early American Baptists earned a place in the social history of this country. Many cultural sub-regions of the United States are still influenced by religious bodies. In rural America, for example, the pastor and deacons still may hold official community offices as in Bennett's case; the public schools may still decline to hold meetings on Sundays or Wednesday nights to avoid conflicts with church events as in the school systems of my own childhood; and the pastor is still seen as an ex officio leader of the community. Many parts of the American west are still influenced socially, politically, and morally by Mormonism. North Carolina in the 1940's and 50's was no different. Bennett's comments about the visible role of the pastor and the school superintendent indicate that these two roles were viewed as

---

[4]G. Willis Bennett, Confronting a Crisis: A Depth Study of Southern Baptist Churches in Metropolitan Transitional Areas (Atlanta: The Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention), 1967.

composing a part of the community's aristocracy. Classic examples of this form of pattern maintenance are also found in Bennett's own years as a pastor. While serving as the pastor of the Olive Chapel Baptist Church and the First Baptist Church of Red Springs, Bennett became an authority figure in the community. Even the governor took notice of Bennett's role in community affairs. From this vantage point, Bennett was able to speak a Christian witness on any topic that was in the public arena. These churches were also seen as "gene pools" or sources for the future leadership of the community.[5] The offspring of these gene pools defined the nature of the community they would one day serve as civic leaders.

The SBC and its member churches have served in the adaptation function (A) of the community subsystem, the other function on the internal-external axis.[6] This function builds structures that anchor the system to its stated (or unstated) purpose. This function also insures that the system remains flexible enough to address moderate interruptions, but it focuses the bulk of the energy of the system on the deliberate action of the system.

---

[5]Smelser writes that "gene pools" are the mechanisms systems use in the latent pattern-maintenance function to grow indigenous leadership that, by the time the new leadership grows to maturity, will already be acculturated to the boundaries and functions of the system. Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 13.

[6]Talcott Parsons, The Social System (New York: Free Press, 1951), pp. 5-6.

The classic example of structure in Southern Baptist life is found in the Sunday School Board (SSB) located in Nashville. The SSB is the publishing house for the SBC denomination, but it is also the major human structure-building institution of the SBC. From their offices in Nashville, the employees of the SSB publish million of pages of literature, curriculum materials, and program designs each year. To many Southern Baptists, the materials produced by the SSB are seen as bearing the imprimatur of the SBC. SSB materials still are purchased by churches automatically, without even previewing the content; shipments from the SSB are received automatically by churches every quarter. When one realizes the enormous power that Southern Baptists have given to the SSB to determine what are and what are not viable ministry programs, one can become aware of the influence a writer or director of such materials can wield. The influence of the SSB on the broader evangelical protestant subsystem is multiplied when one realizes how many other evangelical protestant bodies use the SSB's publications.

Similar power is found in the Home Mission Board (HMB) and the Foreign Mission Board (FMB), two key agencies of the SBC. Personal careers, developments of new congregations, state mission projects, overseas investments, and non-American national Baptist bodies depend on the decisions made by these agencies. Many of the agendas of

the state Baptist conventions depend on the resources of the HMB and the SSB for implementation. Similar statements can be made for the other agencies of the SBC, like the Christian Life Commission, the various seminaries, and the Executive Committee. This document has already demonstrated Bennett's frequent interaction with denominational agencies. Several decisions made by board and agencies have been influenced either by the opinion or research of Bennett. By influencing all of these agencies, Bennett has exerted a great deal of personal power. In fact, as indicated by Bennett's frequent appearance at the national training centers, agency meetings, and personal consultations, it seems that from about 1967-80, Bennett was the key resource for the SBC agencies in urban ministry.[7]

The horizontal axis in the system, the instrumental-consummatory axis, pushes the system to stay active while maintaining the functions of the system. This axis drives the system toward a goal or a set of goals. Two functions rest on the horizontal axis. The goal attainment function (G) drives the system to be creative. While A is more concerned with maintenance, G is more concerned with growth. G moves the system to meet the challenges presented when A

---

[7]With the exception of the Foreign Mission Board, as noted by Rose and Hadaway. See Statement by Larry Rose, Former Director of the Center for Urban Church Studies, in a telephone interview with the author on March 12, 1993. And Statement by Kirk Hadaway, Former Researcher of the Center for Urban Church Studies, in a telephone interview with the author on April 21, 1993.

cannot cope with the outside influences pushing for innovation. G creates new models for the system to use.[8]

Bennett spent a great deal of energy pushing the SBC and its institutions to innovate. The final chapter of the Crisis book is filled with challenges to the denomination. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Bennett called for urban training, cooperative networks, seminary classes, and direct assistance. The Association for Christian Training and Service (ACTS) is a lasting reminder of Bennett's innovative influence. Every person I interviewed in regard to the innovative structures that grew out of the 1965-1980 era in the SBC's involvement in urban ministry traces the roots of those structures to that chapter.

Bennett also pushed Southern Seminary to innovate. He engineered the organization of the Church and Community department in the face of systemic institutional resistance. He played a key leadership role in the development of the Carver School of Church Social Work. Bennett wrote the framework for the supervised ministry program. Oates and Bennett organized the Doctor of Ministry degree on Southern's campus and led it through the accreditation process.

Bennett pushed the churches he served as pastor to innovate. A cooperative canning factory, a community based

---

[8]Robert H. Lauer, Perspectives on Social Change, 4th ed. (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1991), p. 84.

social ministry, and farming improvements are tangible reminders of the creative force of Bennett. These churches are lasting reminders of Bennett's influence.

But not only did Bennett push for innovation, he was a key figure in helping those innovations integrate into the larger system. The fourth function, integration (I) provides the internal adaptive mechanism of the system. Bennett not only developed ideas, he built structures to support ideas. He left behind a trail of organizations with bylaws, charters, organizational charts, and office procedures; a seminary curriculum and a department; and journal articles that are lasting reminders of his presence. The danger of the I function is that the innovation will be "over-institutionalized" so that it loses its creative edge. That danger will be addressed in a section that follows.

Bennett and the Change Process

This dissertation has chronicled in detail Bennett's activities in the SBC. But it has not yet addressed the issue of the change process itself. This section follows Smelser's work identified in the second chapter as an explanation for Bennett's method of social change.

Structural differentiation is the hallmark of a structural-functional analysis and Smelser is no exception. If change is indeed verifiable, sequential, and predictable, then an analysis of social change should be able to identify

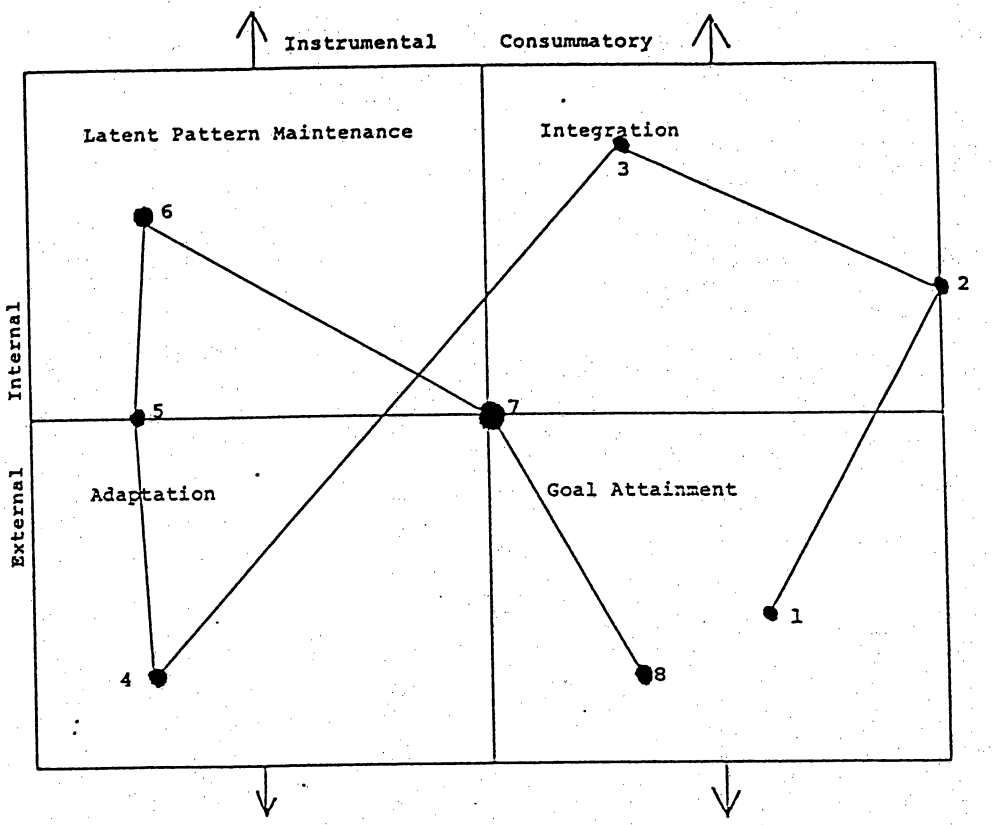

Figure 5.1

The Stages of Social Change and
Their Correlate Functions

the procedure of change. Figure 5.1 traces the path of change as it moves through the functions in the system.[9]

If Smelser is right, then this pattern of social change will vary little from system to system or even subsystem to subsystem. This dissertation certainly does not claim universality of application. Its task is to trace the path of social change in the SBC. But Smelser's theory provides valuable analytical tools to many different human systems.

Stage One: Disruption in Goal Achievement

The change of the SBC in its approach to urban ministry began with a hint of disruption in the goal achievement function of the system. The 1960's were tumultuous years for the United States and Southern Baptists were as jittery about the state of the nation as other Americans. Children raised in "good Christian homes" were listening to "rowdy" music, refusing to adopt traditional personal grooming habits, and wearing clothing previously considered to be inappropriate. Additionally, the SBC had hit a high-mark in enthusiasm in 1954, with the national "A Million More in '54" campaign.[10] But by the mid-1960's,

---

[9]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 15.

[10]Bennett writes that "the combined churches of the associations (studied) have shown growth in many ways since 1950 . . . . The larger rate of growth was noted between 1950 and 1955, and the smallest rate of growth since 1960." But the demographics from the central city churches showed a different picture. He writes, "the churches (in the central

people living in urban areas were likely to be regular Baptist church attenders. Attendance and offerings at SBC churches in the metropolitan centers of the country were in decline and Southern Baptists were unequipped to handle the changes. The tent revivals so popular in the South in earlier days just did not seem to have the same results in large cities. The social controls of the SBC attempted to respond to the disruption utilizing existing resources. If revivals worked in the rural south, why did they not work in the northern cities? Baptists soon learned that they were unequipped to reach urban dwellers. Very little had been published by the Baptist publishing houses that was multi-cultural or even bi-cultural. The literature, church programs, and other periodicals were overwhelmingly focused on the traditional family arrangement valued in the South. One example of the denomination's inability to relate to urban families is found in Home Life magazine, the SBC's periodical for family enrichment. It was not addressing the social and family issues highlighted by the social unrest in the urban centers. The articles were, and still are, aimed at the traditional family model. Another example is found in the Sunday school curriculum produced by the Sunday School Board. The art work in both adult and children's

---

city) showed gains from 1950 to 1955, then the decline set in. By 1964, not only were there fewer members and persons enrolled in Sunday School than in 1960, but even fewer than in 1950." Bennett, Crisis, pp. 15-16.

literature pictured anglo mothers and fathers taking their anglo children to the steepled church on the corner. The illustrations used in the lesson commentaries reflected a southern male perspective. Pastors and church members in the nation's cities were expressing their displeasure with the home office in Nashville and urban dwellers were staying away.

Bennett's research in Crisis demonstrated that the long-stated goal of evangelism in the nation's cities was seeming more and more remote.[11] The external arm of the SBC system was not effective in reaching into the surrounding environment to generate new life in the denomination. The input from the environment was shutting down and the system seemed headed for entropy.[12]

Stage Two: Eruption in Goal Achievement

Step two is the actual eruption. The 1969 Woodstock concert is perhaps the most visible example of disruption in the nation's social fabric. But the 1960's are filled with many examples of psychic disturbances, from the Kennedy assassinations to Kent State. The deaths of Baptist churches in urban areas were different kinds of

---

[11]G. Willis Bennett, Confronting a Crisis: A Depth Study of Southern Baptist Churches in Metropolitan Transitional Areas (Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1967).

[12]Bennett, Crisis, p. 21. The full quotation is found on page 47 of this dissertation.

disruptions. Although the overall picture of Baptist life in the 1950's and 60's may have been one of stability and even growth, especially compared to mainline churches, the churches in the cities were gasping for new life. The absence of urban churches from the denominational reports probably went unnoticed by the majority of the denomination, but the leadership of the Home Mission Board took the trends seriously and began to ponder the future of Baptist churches in the city.[13]

The flight to the suburbs by numerous Baptist churches during these decades is another example of disruption. It would appear that these churches were convinced that their congregations could not sustain healthy ministries in their urban locations.[14] By moving, these churches either admitted that they were powerless to make a change in the community in which they were located or that they wanted to escape the constraints of the neighborhood. The anti-urban bias of suburban church members discouraged church attendance in the urban neighborhoods. Fear of the

---

[13]Statement by George Willis Bennett, retired Provost of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author in Louisville, Kentucky, on March 23, 1993.

[14]My own experience with a church in this predicament is my home church in Springfield, Missouri. Originally named East Avenue Baptist Church and located in a transitional neighborhood, the congregation voted to relocate to a main thoroughfare in a new neighborhood. The church is now known as National Heights Baptist Church. The old church building was sold to a small neighborhood church whose own building had burned.

city became a part of the SBC subculture in many parts of the country. The flight to the suburbs also indicated a belief that those who chose to stay in the urban centers were carrying "unrealistic aspirations" about the future of the urban church. The only equilibrium experienced by these churches in flight was in their new locations safely tucked in suburban neighborhoods. These churches failed to respond to the dissatisfaction in the urban system with equilibrium. It was increasingly obvious to denominational officers that the SBC was not moving toward goal attainment, but away from it. The value on numerical growth through evangelism could only be achieved in suburbia, it was believed.

Stage Three: Values that Direct the Energy

Stage three happens when the system realizes that equilibrium under the current circumstance is impossible. The system utilizes its values to stretch the boundary to quell the disruption. Smelser writes, "(The value system) supplies standards for legitimizing and approving new ideas and plans. The value system thus limits the directions and degrees of change."[15] The values also frame the nature of the answer to the disturbance. The decline of SBC influence in urban communities was not reversed by using intensified forms of southern culture. In other words, extra loud evangelistic preaching and church dinners on the lawn did

---

[15]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 16.

not work. But evangelism, perhaps the strongest of SBC values, drove the circumstances of the discussion. Southern Baptists were not generally talking about rehabilitating the housing in the city or even addressing the poverty or social conditions in the city; they were talking about "saving" the city. Evangelism remained the dominant value, but new avenues of expressing that value came into vogue. Evangelism once had inferred tent-revival crusades and extended meetings in the spring and fall. The value on evangelism remained, but the baggage it carried with it was open to modification. As Smelser indicates, the value that provides the boundary may also be the value that restricts or guides the direction of the innovation.[16] The value that legitimated earlier units in the system holds the power to legitimate or reject the innovation. For Southern Baptists, any change of approach to urban ministry must be able to pass the litmus test of "evangelism."

Stage Four: The First Movement toward Adaptation

Step four is the proliferation of new ideas that occurs in the adaptation function. The system begins to search for responses to the threat to its equilibrium.[17] Here Bennett enters the schema. He has not been mentioned

---

[16]Smelser, Social Change in the Industrial Revolution, p. 22.

[17]Ibid., p. 15.

before this time because it was the Crisis study in 1965-67 that brought him on the denomination's stage. But it is reasonable to say that his interest in urban issues was already growing due to his experience in the social work school at the University of Louisville. In 1965, Bennett was approached by the Home Mission Board to conduct a study of SBC churches in urban areas. Arthur Rutledge and Harold Bennett initiated the overture to Bennett. Why did they choose Bennett? Rutledge and H. Bennett were both graduates of Southern Seminary and they enjoyed a friendly relationship with many members of the seminary faculty. Southern was also the only Southern Baptist seminary to be teaching Church and Community courses, at that time still in the ethics department. Southern had enjoyed a reputation for some time as the most "academic" of the SBC seminaries and academic-style research was what the HMB desired.[18] The Carver School of Missions and Social Work, attached to Southern's campus, also provided resources for urban work. Once it was decided to turn to Southern for help, the search began for the appropriate researcher. Bennett's completion of the M.S.S.W. at the university gave him a research angle that no other Southern faculty member enjoyed. One can only speculate if the HMB executives noticed that all of

---

[18]Statement by Russell Bennett, Executive Director of the Long Run Baptist Association, Louisville, KY, in an interview with the author at Panama City Beach, FL, on May 19, 1993.

Bennett's professional and personal experiences outside of the seminary were spent in rural areas. That must have meant something of a risk for the HMB, but he was still determined to be their best option.

Bennett conducted the study and the first drafts of the book were published in the HMB's magazine.[19] His research confirmed exactly what had been feared. Southern Baptists were losing strength in the cities. Baptism and church growth statistics indicated that the SBC was losing any strength it may once have held in the city. The publication of the findings in Home Missions magazine and in Bennett's Crisis book was meant to spark discussion. It certainly must have done that for from that time on, Bennett became the Southern Baptist expert on urbanity. He spoke on the issue from pulpits, in lecture halls, and at the SBC conference centers. This study altered the SBC system, but it also forever changed the direction of Bennett's career. He changed from a specialist in rural life to an urban expert. Bennett published his last article on rural life in October, 1965.[20] Ironically, although Bennett had only served professionally in rural America, he became known as

---

[19]G. Willis Bennett, "The City Church and the Area of Transition," Home Missions 37 (January 1966), 6-28. Excerpts of the study were also printed in the issues of November and December 1966, and January 1967.

[20]G. Willis Bennett, "New Life for Declining Churches in Declining Communities," Home Missions, 36 (October 1965), 28-30.

an urban specialist. He was not recognized as an authority because of his successes in urban churches, but because of the Crisis study. I also feel that it is ironic that Bennett became an expert on urban life but he has always lived in small towns or the suburbs of the city.

Stage Five: Integration of the Innovations

The fourth step of systemic change just raises possibilities; it does not make assignments. Step five now moves to integrate into the system the innovations necessary for equilibrium.[21] Denominational executives, those in the system who hold the power to make assignments, turned to the last chapter of Crisis. There they found Bennett's recommendations. The result is the development of the UTC program, the Mega-Focus Cities program, the Center for Urban Church Studies, and all the other innovations discussed in the third chapter. These innovations carried the imprimatur of the SBC. They became part of the system.

Bennett continued to serve as a change agent throughout this fifth level of change. He became a personal advocate to agency executives. He used the denominational platforms to expound his ideas. He made personal phone calls to department and agency heads. But it is important to remember that Bennett was not speaking just with the

---

[21]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 15; and Lauer, Social Change, p. 93.

weight of an academic study behind him. Even he is amazed, in retrospect, how much influence he had because of his faculty status at Southern Seminary.[22] Having the clout of the seminary behind him gave an extra boost to the power of his message. The value of the denomination on its seminaries is another boundary that reinforced the innovation. A professor at Fuller or Trinity seminary, with equal credentials, and equal research capabilities could never have influenced the SBC as one of its own did. The SBC needed a SBC-related change agent.

The SBC's resistance to ecumenism, already documented in Chapter Four, is another prime example of a value shaping the direction of the innovation. In fact, Bennett calls for inter-denominational cooperation in Crisis, but that particular part of Bennett's recommendation has never been applied to the SBC. The value against ecumenism significantly shaped the direction of the SBC.

Stage Six: Pattern Maintenance

The sixth step in Smelser's change schema is where rewards and punishments are handed out because the system uses all of the power available to it to restore equilibrium and to regain a sense of predictability in its patterns. The search for resistance to Bennett's work highlights the potential punishments as the system makes one last attempt

---

[22]G. W. Bennett interview, March 23, 1993.

to resist innovation. The letters to the seminary's president are an indication of that resistance. The HMB's failure to affirm its own involvement in ACTS and the personal swipe at Rutledge that came with the board's resistance to ACTS were punishments for crossing the value boundaries too far. Bennett, on the other hand, received numerous rewards. He traveled extensively; he enjoyed personal relationships with denominational executives that many other faculty members did not have; and he was brought into the academic administration of the seminary. The founding of the Church and Community department and Bennett's assignment to the Brookes chair in 1969 are obvious rewards for raising the visibility of the seminary. One must be careful to say here that perhaps those things would have been showered on Bennett without the Crisis study, but I am convinced that another type of event would have been necessary to bring Bennett onto center stage.

The values of the system are not abandoned at this stage, but are shaped to reflect the changes.[23] Evangelism remained the predominate value for the SBC, but the methods of evangelism were altered. The SBC still clung to the revival as a means of evangelism, but it added social action, urban renewal, and Church and Community awareness to the value. The opening of that value meant an openness to new forms of ministry. Christian social ministries was seen

---

[23]Smelser, Industrial Revolution, p. 16.

by the HMB as a viable department. Southern Seminary's school of church social work was accepted as a legitimate part of a theological institution's curriculum. Funds were allocated by all levels of the denomination for social work, community analysis, and the HMB's program such as UTCs, Mega-Focus Cities programs, and Project: Assistance for Churches in Transitional Communities (PACT) studies. Bennett's impact on those value changes is somewhat immeasurable. He was a part of the process that opened the channels of the convention's resources for urban ministry. The effects of that change are practically untraceable.

Stage Seven: Total Pattern Management

The seventh stage of the change is routinization. Here lies the greatest danger of all for the integrity of the change agent.[24] It can be said first that Bennett's recommendations are now part of a routinized system. The HMB and state conventions regularly conduct UTCs, Mega-Focus Cities programs, Metro-Thrust Cities programs, and PACT studies. These programs have been a part of the agencies' annual budget requests for nearly thirty years. Few people even question their inclusion on state and denominational calendars. The director of the state missions department in the Missouri Baptist Convention provides an illustration. When I inquired, "Are you familiar with the UTC?" he

---

[24]Ibid., p. 16.

replied, "Oh yes, we do two a year throughout the state." But when I asked him, "What does the name Willis Bennett mean to you?" he replied, "Isn't he the director of missions in Louisville?" The innovations Bennett worked so hard to incorporate in the SBC have become so routinized that their roots have been lost. To many Southern Baptist leaders, these programs are assumed to have been in existence since the early days of the HMB.

The conversation with the Missouri missions director raises another observation. While Bennett is seen by many of those who were with him at the start of the research to be the "father" of urban ministry in the SBC, he seems largely unknown to the vast majority of Southern Baptists. As I have shared this dissertation topic with Louisville friends, many of them life-long members of Walnut Street Church in Louisville, I am greeted with blank stares. Some vaguely inquire about the director of the local association, but few have any idea who he is. Bennett, it will be remembered, was even a part of Walnut Street's staff in community ministries for five years.

I think at least four factors are at work to keep Bennett from being more closely associated with the programs he helped to birth. First, Bennett is not known for being a great pulpiteer. His preaching and speaking are informative, prepared, and thorough. But he is not known for the vitality of his preaching. His speaking, like his

personal life, is reflective, thoughtful, and thought-provoking. Although he is occasionally witty, no one I talked to considers him to be "funny." He is neither a born story-teller nor folksy. Although his content is memorable, his delivery is not. These qualities make him a great "behind-the-scenes" player, but not the "star." He has quietly exerted his own personal power to make changes in the lives of individuals in over fifty years of ministry. The changes he brings are significant and long-lasting. They do not die with the laughter. Although another dissertation might argue that Bennett is a charismatic change agent in Weberian terms (and I believe that could be argued successfully), he is not "charismatic" in the popular connotation of the word.

Second, Bennett created the ideas that others built upon. Allen and Bullard both credit Bennett with being the impetus behind PACT studies, but Bennett's name does not appear in their guidebook. R. Bennett called him the "big picture man." Bennett conceived the visions about how ministries could develop and where they would be applied. But others in the denomination did the work of enlisting leadership, organizing conferences, and registering attendees. Bennett was quite often on the platform of those conferences but not the one who greeted the registrants personally and helped them reflect on its meaning for their situations.

Oates says that Bennett stayed "behind the scenes a lot." He is convinced that Bennett was not one to push himself forward. The highest visibility in the seminary went to McCall and Honeycutt, but it was Bennett who often did a great deal of the work that brought the seminary and its presidents recognition.[25]

Third, Bennett wrote surprisingly little. A collection of journal articles, a few chapters in books, and some consultations with agencies are the bulk of his writing. He only authored one book in addition to Crisis. Students at the seminary never had an occasion to read his work if they did not enroll in a Church and Community class. Bennett wrote the bulk of a book on supervised ministry during a sabbatical, but he lacked one chapter when he returned to Louisville.[26] Administrative duties at the seminary distracted him so that he never finished that chapter or the book. Although Bennett leaves behind him an incredible influence on the denomination and the seminary, most of the credit will go to whomever holds the office at any given time. It will not be remembered by future generations of students or administrators that Bennett

---

[25]Statement by Wayne Oates, retired professor of Pastoral Care at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author at Louisville, Kentucky, June 3, 1993.

[26]Statement by Larry McSwain, Provost of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author in Louisville, KY, on April 15, 1993.

founded the Church and Community department, that he wrote the first social work curriculum, or that he established the basic supervised ministry and Doctor of Ministry program in effect today. The denomination has a way of losing the names of persons who make vast contributions by subsuming their identities into the larger SBC identity. They become a part of the vast sea of programs of the SBC. Although a broader writing ministry would not alleviate this sense of absorption, there would be more tangible reminders of the contributions of Bennett to his field.

The lack of an extensive publishing record, Oates says, keeps Bennett's name from being recognizable to a large part of the Christian community. Seminary administration is a meaningful ministry and certainly a service to the denomination, but it does not usually reward individuals publicly. In contrast, Oates declined most offers to take an administrative post and he authored forty-nine books.[27] His name is linked with the field of pastoral care by many persons who have never even met him personally.

And fourth, the ultimate routinization of any change agent is to become so entrenched in the system that he or she becomes a key figure in the maintenance of the system. As Bennett advanced through the ranks of seminary administration, he grew further away from the innovative

---

[27]Oates interview.

work of 1965 when he began the Crisis study to 1973, when he published his last article on urban ministry before a ten year hiatus from published writing. As he moved to the center of the seminary's power structure, he was less effective at challenging the boundaries of the system. In Parson's terms, he focused on the adaptive/pattern maintenance axis.[28] In popular terminology, he moved from "renegade" to "company man." Two things happened because of this shift. First, he began to lose his prophetic voice. The prophet is always a threat to the status quo. So the system co-opts the change agent in one of two ways. Either he is excluded from the system completely or he is absorbed by the system so that he becomes the status quo. An analogy of this type of absorption is found in the oyster. The grain of sand that creeps into the oyster is either spit back out or coated by the oyster with a substance that makes it tolerable to hold. The role of social irritant directly conflicts with the role of an administrator who is trying to maintain the system. In effect, Bennett shifted roles from that of the innovator to the one who resists the innovation. A prime example of this resistance is given by McSwain. One development in McSwain's own academic interests was the management of conflict in ministry. McSwain relates that Bennett always saw his work in conflict management as an

---

[28]Parsons, Social System, p. 6.

aberration of the true intent of the Church and Community department.[29]

Second, almost every person that I interviewed indicated that as Bennett moved up the administrative ladder, his Church and Community material began to feel "dated." Rather than continuing his work as a researcher, Bennett became an administrator. Consequently, his own findings and original work in urban ministry were surpassed by his students and others. Their work was certainly no better qualitatively than his, but it was more current. One source said that if you invited Bennett to speak to an urban ministry workshop in 1980, you heard the same material he was using in 1970. That reality is not the result of a dulling mind or academic insensitivity; it is the reality of the life of an academic administrator with enough paper work and daily problems to discourage any move to the library or the research project. From Bennett's perspective of a seminary administrator, he has been able to cement the changes he innovated in the 1960's. Without him working to maintain the integrity of the program, his ideas might have been swept out with a new seminary administration. But because of his decision to enter administrative life, the Church and Community department and its influence will be difficult to discard.

---

[29]McSwain interview.

The routinization of the change agent often causes anxiety for the change agent himself. As the one who has been campaigning for the change, he may also be the one most protective of the new routine. A number of sources that I interviewed indicated that Bennett became as aggressive in defending the new status quo as he once was for the change. While Bennett is normally rather mild-mannered, his aggression on the floor of faculty meetings is legendary. Students have reported similar experiences in the classroom. What can account for these responses? Psychologically, one could certainly talk about the fatigue of a fourteen year old denominational controversy that has turned much of Southern Baptist life into a battleground, as Honeycutt mentions. But sociologically, one must talk about the role of the boundary-enforcer versus the role of the change agent. The two roles are never compatible. The energy required to exert change early in the process has to be dispersed to another function of the system or eliminated as an input. As long as the force remains, it must be channeled. Bennett, by accepting administrative roles, used that energy to fuel the maintenance function.

An excellent example of the change versus maintenance shift in Bennett is given by Bullard. While Bullard was a graduate student at the seminary, he was also a pastor in Louisville's west end. The neighborhood in which the church was located was dependent upon three

institutions for its life. The Roosevelt Elementary School, the Baptist church, and the Neighborhood House, a social agency, were integral to the neighborhood system. When the Jefferson County public school system integrated in the mid-1970's, the school board mandated that all schools had to experience busing or close down. Roosevelt Elementary school was the only school in the system that was already racially balanced. The judge who issued the integration order declared that Roosevelt could stay open without busing. Many in the city protested the decision to say that everyone must be bused. Bullard invested in a neighborhood movement to collect signatures on petitions and he spoke on the issue at public hearings before the school board. Bullard recalls taking the petition to the graduate seminar to collect signatures. He says, "Willis became enraged that I would do anything to stop the movement of school busing. He threw the petition back across the table at me as being non-Christian in any way, shape, or form." Bullard is convinced that Bennett did not hear the point he was trying to make because he was so entrenched in his own battle for social change in community integration.[30] Table 5.1 compares Smelser's seven stages with the stages discussed here.

---

[30]Statement by George Bullard, Director of the Missions Department of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, in a telephone interview with the author, April 7, 1993.

Table 5.1

A Comparison of Smelser's Stages of Change and the Change Process in the Southern Baptist Convention

Smelser's Seven Stages of Social Change	Comparable Change Response in the Southern Baptist Convention
Stage 1: Dissatisfaction experienced by individuals or collectives; sense of inadequate role performance	Stage 1: Numerical decline in SBC churches in urban areas, documented by Bennett in Confronting a Crisis
Stage 2: Eruption in the social system; psychic disturbances; system attempts to reinforce equilibrium	Stage 2: Woodstock and Kent State-type of societal disruptions; churches express anti-urban bias with flight to the suburbs; usual evangelistic strategies ineffective
Stage 3: Reinforcement of value-system in "covert" handling of disturbance	Stage 3: Values of evangelism and anti-ecumenism used to handle urban challenge covertly
Stage 4: Brainstorming of new ideas to respond to the disturbance; discussion begins	Stage 4: Bennett enlisted to conduct Crisis study; chapter in book brainstorms new ideas; Bennett discusses with SBC agencies
Stage 5: System takes concrete steps to institutionalize innovations	Stage 5: UTC, PACT studies, Mega-Focus Cities programs born; budgets drawn to reflect innovations; Bennett appears at conference centers; Church and Community department organized
Stage 6: Rewards and punishments for success and failure; values are shaped to fit innovations	Stage 6: Bennett rewarded for denominational work with administrative jobs; skills as an organizer recognized; Rutledge reprimanded for ecumenical approach; Bennett reprimanded for ecumenical work
Stage 7: Changes routinized into the system; innovations become defenders of the system	Stage 7: Bennett is placed in the denominational system; Church and Community part of the seminary's required curriculum; HMB program routinized in the denominational calender

Stage Eight: The Birth of a New Iconoclast

Smelser does not mention an eighth stage. But one can simply follow Smelser's evolutionary systemic approach and realize that the system either stagnates and dies or continues to receive input from the environment. The failure to input innovations into the system is to invite its death through social entropy. There is always someone, in a healthy system, who will come into the system and begin pointing out its weaknesses.

There is an indication, in fact, that the next stage of innovation is erupting in state conventions to threaten the established value on these early programs. It is Bennett's students that are raising the dust of innovation. Bullard's work in South Carolina is an example of innovations growing out of the routinized changes. He reports that the South Carolina Baptist Convention is not doing PACT studies, but a new program he calls "Kingdom Growth." As the SBC has lost its focus on "Bold Mission Thrust" and replaced it with a focus on the convention controversy, state conventions and local associations are carrying on the work of innovative evangelism.

The crisis in the SBC since 1979 is bringing with it its own set of innovations. With the call to "pure evangelism" comes a discrediting of social ministries. The zealous concern for larger numbers in churches is drawing financial and human resources away from a sensi-

tivity to urban issues. Only time will tell if the restructuring of mission strategies validated solely on the number of annual baptisms proves able to sustain the growth Baptist churches desire in the nation's cities. Bennett argued throughout his career that an effective urban evangelism strategy includes ministries to improve the social conditions of the city. The danger of an evangelism strategy whose sole objective and evaluative criterion is numerical growth lies in the form of the gospel that we preach. If our strategy implies that God cares only for the soul and not for the condition of the human life, then he is a god who does not dirty his hands with a broken humanity.

Systemic Values: Bennett's Contribution to the Boundaries

The boundaries of a system are the values it treasures, as has been noted. Values are both the alarm system that notifies the system of a transgression and the key to the rewards. Those who function within the boundaries of the system are viewed as cooperative and valuable. But those who push the value boundaries are discounted and are perceived as a threat by those who are given the task of protecting the integrity of the system.

Several values in Southern Baptist life have been discovered through the process of this research. Perhaps the strongest value in the context of the Southern Baptist Convention is evangelism. Baptismal figures, that is the

number of people who can be said to have been evangelized, supply the progress report for convention agencies and local churches. Pastors are publicly rewarded for high baptismal rates and privately discounted for low ones. The value on evangelism also means that any new product or program of a denominational agency must be proven to satisfy that value. Social work programs must promise to be for evangelistic purposes in order to secure funding and affirmation.

Evangelism, Baptists believe, is not only a fulfillment of the commands of Jesus, it is how the system is perpetuated. New converts mean extra dollars to support denominational programs, theological institutions, and agency expansion. The fear of loss of numerical strength pushed Southern Baptists to look to the cities for growth. That push resulted in Bennett's research and his successive popularity. Although his personal reasons for ministry in the city may have been based on different values, his research was promoted because of its potential effect on urban evangelism.

Second, Southern Baptists have for over fifty years affirmed the value of approval from the "home office." The executive committee and denominational agencies have been given an incredible amount of power by local churches to determine what is and what is not acceptable for Southern Baptists. To threaten the product of a denominational agency is often seen as a threat to the Southern Baptist

Convention and, by extension, to the purposes of God's kingdom.

Bennett pushed the boundary of agency power by encouraging churches to regain control over their own evangelistic efforts. The whole theme of "Know your community" has an underlying discount on anyone who comes into a system with a pre-packaged, "one-size-fits-all" program of ministry.

Third, Baptists eschew cooperative efforts with Christian groups other than Southern Baptists. The SBC is one of only two major denominations that are not members of the National Council of Churches.[31] The story of ACTS and the HMB's resistance to cooperation is another example of the SBC's fear of cooperation. The value on anti-ecumenism gives a clear picture of the purpose of a value. Value boundaries vividly demonstrate who is inside and who is outside the system. By keeping this value boundary strong, Southern Baptists have been able to identify their constituency clearly. Bennett's work often threatened that boundary and he was reprimanded. A prime example of the systemic reprimand is found in the letters that President McCall received about Bennett's role in ecumenical organizations.

---

[31]The other denomination is the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The Origin of Bennett's Values

Values are important in a person's life, just as they are in a system. And as in a system, values provide the boundaries that separate our individual actions from the actions of the environment. Prime examples of values/boundaries are the "Ten Commandments.[32]" Given by God to Moses and from Moses to the rest of Judeo-Christian history, the ten laws are ten values that human beings are to cherish. They serve as boundaries to separate civilized humanity from the animal kingdom. They also govern human relationships and guide the determination of right and wrong for people of conscience.

The Ten Commandments are the classic example of boundaries that govern behavior. Each of us adds laws to or subtracts laws from the Ten Commandments to shape our own set of values. The influence one human being exerts over another can be said to be "value driven," that is, we want to establish the boundaries. When we try to get another person to see an issue from our perspective, we are really asking that person to adopt our values. An example is found in my own home. I use my power over my five year old son so that he will do what I tell him to do. I use discipline, enticements, and maybe even bribes to change his behavior. I want him to pattern his values on my own.

---

[32]Exodus 20:1-17, NIV.

Bennett, as a change agent, spent a lifetime trying to get other people to see issues from his perspective. But what is his perspective? Incipient answers to that question can be found in Chapter Three of this dissertation. Certainly his parents, Nane Starnes, and Caroline Dillard influenced his early moral development. But Bennett was also influenced by the educational experiences he had at Wake Forest University and Southern Seminary. Through his study of ethics, Bennett came to embrace some values that have driven his life and influenced the lives of others. His doctoral dissertation is perhaps the clearest statement he has ever made in writing about his own values.

Bennett left the seminary in 1950 to assume the pastorate of the Olive Chapel Baptist Church in Apex, North Carolina. In March, 1954, Bennett submitted his doctoral dissertation to a committee of instruction chaired by O. T. Binkley. The title of his dissertation is "A Comparative Study of the Cardinal Virtues in Philosophical Ethics and the Personal Virtues in the Teaching of Jesus and Paul."[33]

The first chapter "examined the teachings in philosophical ethics related to the cardinal virtues,

---

[33]George Willis Bennett, "A Comparative Study of the Cardinal Virtues in Philosophical Ethics and the Personal Virtues in the Teaching of Jesus and Paul," Th.D. Dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1954.

viewing them as they were suggested by Socrates, originally proposed by Plato, and further expounded by Aristotle."[34] The second chapter turned to the teachings of Jesus and Paul regarding their understanding of personal virtues. The third chapter compares the two different stances.

Bennett says that the "cardinal virtues" are wisdom, temperance, courage, and justice. Ancient Christianity discarded several other values espoused by Greek and Latin cultures, but kept these four. They were seen to be consistent with contemporary Christian thought.[35] But these values were reinterpreted into the Christian context. Bennett contends that the process of incorporation and conversation consumed nine centuries of Christian history, culminating in Aquinas.[36]

Bennett looks to Ambrose to define justice. "A good man ought not to swerve from the truth, nor to inflict an unjust loss on any one, nor to act in any way deceitfully or fraudulently."[37] Bennett says that justice is also called "kindness which consists of both good will and liberality." Quoting Ambrose again, Bennett writes, "Justice is of advantage to others rather than to oneself, and neglects its

---

[34]Ibid., p. 193.

[35]Ibid., p. 194.

[36]Ibid., p. 195.

[37]Ibid., p. 197.

own interests, preferring what is beneficial to all."[38] Bennett says, "The supreme virtue of Christianity, while not classed by the name of love among the cardinal virtues, receives full recognition under the name of justice."[39]

Bennett finds in Augustine the virtue of temperance. He quotes Augustine, "The whole duty of temperance is to put off the old man, and to be renewed in God,--that is to scorn all bodily delights, and the popular applause, and to turn the whole love to things divine and unseen."[40] Seeking the love of God by sacrificing for fellow human beings is the highest form of worship, Bennett writes.[41]

"Fortitude, or courage, is understood simply as the 'bearing the loss . . .' of earthly things for the sake of the object of love," Bennett writes.[42] Wisdom, the fourth cardinal virtue, must "'discern between what is to be desired and what is to be shunned,' for without wisdom none of the other virtues would be able to function properly," Bennett says.[43]

All four of the virtues are "brought together in the love of God." Bennett writes, "The cardinal virtues have

---

[38]Ibid., p. 198.

[39]Ibid.

[40]Ibid., p. 201.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid., p. 202.

little significance for Augustine apart from the context of love."[44] Bennett summarizes the place of love in the Christian life with

> Primarily, Christian love is love to God and friendship with Him. Secondarily, Christian love means love for one's neighbor for the sake of God. But love does not stop short of being directed toward all God's creatures, and this implies love for oneself.[45]

Bennett believes that growth is an essential life-long part of the Christian experience. He writes, "One should not make the error of thinking of Christian character as automatic or an unconscious process . . . . The Christian life while not beginning from habit, may well become more mature through the repeated practice of virtuous conduct."[46]

Bennett, in the conclusion of the dissertation, writes "Justice sees the lawful thing and renders what is due, but no more. Love never inquires how little it is expected to give, but renders more than is due." The highest moral ethic, the greatest boundary/value for the Christian, Bennett would say, is self-giving love. Bennett's last paragraph is as follows:

> Moral virtue, therefore, has a direct bearing upon Christian social ethics. The Christian must give intelligent study to the problems of his day. In the light of the teachings of the New Testament, and a quickened moral consciousness, the Christian seeks the

---

[44]Ibid.

[45]Ibid., p. 211.

[46]Bennett, Cardinal Virtues, p. 220.

> answer to those problems. The possession of the "new life in Christ," the comprehension of the type of moral character involved and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, directs one toward a formulation of social practices in basic agreement with the will of God. It is not enough then to think only in terms of duty and conduct. Man must see that these are governed by character, which in turn should, by the power of God, depict the Christian virtues analyzed in this study.[47]

The search in Bennett's dissertation for keys to understanding his spiritual life provides helpful insight into the values that have driven Bennett's outward life. Many of his actions on behalf of social change can be seen to have taken root here in his early thought. One can also see his childhood motto, "Thy will be done, no matter where it leads, no matter what it costs" shaping his adult life. For Bennett, coping with the resistance to positive change is "what it costs" to follow the will of God. Moral living also comes as the result of activity and growth. God's will, Bennett would say, is worth doing one's self, not just watching someone else do. Bennett has spent most of a lifetime exerting his influence to do what he believes to be the will of a loving God.

Implications for Future Change Agents: A Student's Reflection

The research for this dissertation has been an extraordinary pedagogical exercise for me. There have been several "ah-ha" moments when the classroom experiences as a

---

[47]Ibid., pp. 268-69.

Church and Community student, personal struggles with ministry in an urban setting, and research insights have fallen together. Those serendipitous moments, combined with a personal dedication to make a difference in the world, has led me to consider the question "Following Bennett's example, how can I be an agent of social change?"

First, Bennett seems to have had the rare ability to learn from his own environment. He has retained the perspective of a student. As Dever indicated, Bennett became a colleague with his students in the education experience.[48] Consequently, he gleaned the best resources available to him. He, rightly, confesses that it was the experience at the Olive Chapel Baptist Church that garnered the seminary's attention for his candidacy of a faculty position. It was Olive Chapel's reputation that graced him. There is no doubt that Bennett worked hard to carry on the tradition of social action born in the congregation from its birth, but he did not create it.

His experience as a volunteer staff member at Walnut Street Baptist Church, a large central city congregation, exposed him to the same level of social commitment but in the urban setting. Bennett gave keen leadership to his work, but he was also a student. He acknowledges the impact

---

[48]Statement by John P. Dever, Professor of Church and Community at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, on April 13, 1993.

that the Walnut Street experience had on his own personal and academic development.

Bennett's willingness to attend the University of Louisville to acquire the M.S.S.W. degree after the completion of his own terminal degree is a testimony to his desire to expand his academic background. It is rare for a faculty member with an earned doctorate to pursue and be awarded another entire degree. Bennett demonstrated his commitment to the field of Church and Community with his willingness to sacrifice personal time to expand his field of knowledge.

If one follows Bennett's model, the first principle of developing a lifestyle of change agentry is to be the best student possible of the environment. Academic preparation, demographic analysis, a student's attitude, and being environmentally "savvy"[49] are requirements for an effective change agent.

A second reflection from a study of Bennett's professional life is that, in addition to ability and

---

[49]I am aware that the concept of being "savvy" to one's environment is not standard academic language for a dissertation. But I would contend that it is an essential quality for effectiveness. It is, perhaps, the qualitative distinction between a change agent who can articulate a strategy for change only from the relative safety of the ivory tower of academia and one who can become a successful agent of change in a real-life community. Another word for this quality would be "chutzpa," a Yiddish word for "nerve" or "courage." Bennett's life has demonstrated his ability and willingness to be a change agent in both theory and practice.

education, denominational "connections" are important for career advancement. Bennett was not an unknown quantity to Henlee Barnette when President McCall assigned him the task of compiling a profile on Bennett. Bennett, Oates, Howington, and Barnette had all been classmates at Wake Forest University. Bennett and Barnette were classmates at Mars Hill College. They all came out of rural North Carolina. They all completed advanced degrees at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. I am not, in any sense, impugning the academic qualifications these men earned to prepare them for their placements in the denomination. Each of them have demonstrated, time and again, their value to the seminary and to the denomination. But I also cannot discount the value of being known by persons in leadership roles who provide opportunities for a demonstration of ability.

Bennett, it will be recalled, used his influence to provide similar opportunities for his students. Certainly McSwain and Dever are outstanding scholars in their own right, but Bennett's stature at the seminary and his positive relationship with them perhaps opened some doors that would not have otherwise been available. Bennett's phone call to Foy Valentine, documented in the fourth chapter, on behalf of David Sapp, provided perhaps the extra

incentive Valentine needed to offer Sapp the position.[50] This is not intended, in any way, to detract from the ability and credentials these men hold, but functionally, someone inside the social system often has more power to raise up key players in the system than someone outside the boundaries. To follow Smelser's argument in regards to the gene pool, any of us would choose our own offspring over someone else's.

What do these comments mean to a potential change agent? They simply mean that Bennett's life models the importance of knowing the key players in a system in order to influence the system. The danger of this dimension of a system is that some persons who could contribute generously to the quality of life in the system might be overlooked because of the lack of a personal advocate. At its best, this quality of a social system means that persons selected from the social gene pool are the most knowledgeable about the functional exigencies of the system. At its worst, it is the "old-boy system" of advancement that discriminates against those without the correct genetic makeup, whether gender, race, or chosen seminary.

A third reflection from this research was something of a surprise. That was the important role that the

---

[50]The reader will recall the telephone conversation between Foy Valentine and G. W. Bennett, as related by G. W. Bennett in an interview with the author at Louisville, KY, April 6, 1993.

homiletics department at Southern Seminary played in the seminary's interest in social reform and ministry. Chapter Four documented that Charles Spurgeon Gardner, the seminary's first professor to teach "Christian Sociology," J. B. Weatherspoon, his successor in the professorship in Christian Sociology, and Nolan Howington, an Ethics professor, were all homiletics professors before they became sociology professors. It seems to me that the Preaching department at Southern Seminary can lay as great a claim as any other department to the founding of the Church and Community department. But why did the emphasis come from homiletics?

The research for the dissertation did not include the backgrounds and personal interests of these three professors or their qualifications to teach sociology and Church and Community. Consequently, based on this research, one can only conjecture about the connections between the two disciplines. But it seems apparent, upon consideration, that the Church and Community department and the Preaching department have some common interests. Both fields consider the demographic makeup and perceived needs of the target audience when designing an appeal. They are sensitive to the environments in which they function. The preaching event is designed to change the hearts, minds, and actions of the congregants. The social change strategy is also concerned with values, attitudes, and activities. While the

two fields often utilize different methodologies to accomplish their tasks, they also use some of the same tools. A religious social change strategist certainly considers preaching to be an act of social change; a preacher certainly considers social change one of her primary tasks.

My own experience as a graduate student reinforces some of the crossover between the two departments. A homiletics seminar with Raymond Bailey in which I was enrolled in 1989 focused on hermeneutics. While the particular focus of the seminar was on the use of hermeneutics of preaching, the reading and the seminar presentations broached the broader field of hermeneutics. I wrote a seminar paper on Clifford Geertz, the anthropologist. Class discussion in Bailey's seminar included the contemporary hermeneutical work of David Tracy. In a graduate level seminar in sociology at the University of Louisville in 1990, I wrote a seminar paper on Tracy, with the encouragement of the professor. Even graduate sociology departments in a secular university share a hermeneutical interest with the Preaching department in a Southern Baptist seminary. The research for this dissertation reinforces the notion that a Church and Community graduate student should consider a field in Preaching as part of his academic preparation and vice versa.

A fourth reflection as a result of the research for this dissertation is that the more I learned, the more I realized I did not know. It would be a fascinating dissertation to trace the crossover in interest between homiletics and sociology. I would be interested, but feel unequipped for the research, in the psychological factors that encourage someone to become a change agent. What are the psychic strengths needed to face the prospect of change? Another project could update Bullard's 1975 replication of Bennett's Crisis study to document the impact of the denominational conflict on urban ministry in the SBC. And yet another project is needed to study the anti-urban bias present among seminary students, both those entering the seminary and those graduating. Bennett's work as an agent of change has opened up fields of inquiry that hold interesting projects for future generations of Church and Community students.

Bennett as Barrier Breaker: A Theological Postscript

While this work has necessarily been primarily academic in nature, it seems inappropriate to conclude the study without a theological reflection on Bennett's life in ministry. He has seen his life as a ministry, a calling that came from God. I am suggesting that Bennett's life in ministry can be characterized as one that helped to tear

down the walls of poverty, injustice, and inequality in over fifty years of active ministry.

The book of Acts tells the story of the moving of the Spirit of God in the days following the resurrection. Here the reader finds the social, practical, and spiritual implications of the passion of Christ. One also finds a cultural system identified by strong social and religious boundaries. Sociologically, the preaching of Jesus of Nazareth and the response of the residents of Palestine to his message presented an eruption in the pattern-maintenance function of both the Jews and the occupying Romans.

To the Jews in power, Jesus and his followers threatened their powerbase of religious authority. By strict enforcement of the law of Moses, the Jewish authorities managed the personal, social, financial, and religious lives of their followers. The boundaries were clear. Faithful Jews abstained from work on the Sabbath, kept a kosher diet, and contributed regularly to the temple coffer. The threat of social isolation on earth and punishment in the afterlife were values that served to limit the threatening activity of a potential iconoclast.

To the occupying Romans, keeping the <u>pax romana</u> was a priority task. The appointment of a relative unknown, Pontius Pilate, to the seat of Roman authority in Palestine indicated that Palestine was certainly not the most

desirable post in the ancient world.[51] Any disruption in the pattern maintenance function of the system of Roman authority was viewed as a threat to peace.

Harbour, in his introduction to Acts, writes that

> Luke's purpose was to proclaim the expansion of Christianity to all the world "without hindrance." The central theme of the book is that God was doing something in the world in Jesus Christ that could not be stopped by anyone or anything. No barriers could prevent the spread of the gospel across the world.[52]

Harbour is apparently picking up on the work of Stagg in The Book of Acts. Stagg writes that the author of Acts demonstrated the triumph of Christianity over the religious, racial, and national limitations experienced by Christians in the ancient world. Stagg hinges his argument on the last word in the book, "unhinderedly."[53] This word characterizes the theme of the writer's intent for the entire book.[54]

The Jews, the Romans, the Hellenists, and many others attempted to stop the moving of the gospel as it

---

[51]The only archaeological record of Pilate is at Caeserea Maritima, a Roman city built by Herod, where his name is found inscribed on a building stone.

[52]Brian Harbour, "Acts," New International Version: Disciple's Study Bible (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers), p. 1358.

[53]The English translation reads slightly different: "Boldly and without hindrance he (Paul) preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 28:31, NIV).

[54]Frank Stagg, The Book of Acts (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955), p. 12.

transformed the lives of its hearers. But the witness of Acts is that faith in Christ brings change, both in the personal life of his disciples and in the social structures in which they participate.

The power to exert change was given by Jesus to his disciples at his ascension, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."[55] The power of the risen Christ overcame the barrier of human illness as related in Acts 3: 1-10, the healing of the crippled beggar. The power of the risen Christ gave Peter and John the strength to bear their witness to the Sanhedrin when they were arrested for sedition[56] and gave Peter the strength to preach to the religious authorities "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which they must be saved."[57] And that same power enabled the followers of Jesus to live as social equals, sharing their possessions in a communal experiment.[58]

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus in the ninth chapter demonstrates the power of the Spirit of God to transform the will of a determined pattern maintainer into

---

[55]Acts 1:8, NIV.

[56]Acts 4.

[57]Acts 4:12.

[58]Acts 4:32ff.

perhaps the most effective change agent in Christian history. Paul's ministry and his writings have spread over every inhabited continent and into almost every human culture. His conversion stands as a model of how a routinized systemic lackey can become an agent of social change.

Hull, writing in Beyond the Barriers, says "Ours is a wall-weary world searching for those liberating forces which can breach the battlements that constrict the human spirit."[59] Our hope is in the work of Christ, which is "not to dismantle walls literally but to obliterate the hostilities which they fostered."[60] Hull later writes that Christ has overcome the social wall that separates human social groups, the sexual wall which separates men and women in a first class/second class status, the sacral wall which separates laity and clergy, and the spiritual wall that separates God and humanity.[61]

The story of the gospel told in Acts demonstrates the power of the gospel to overcome human-erected barricades between people and between God and humanity. It tells the story of the gospel as it overcomes persecution and

---

[59]William E. Hull, Beyond the Barriers: A Study of Reconciliation for the Contemporary Church (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981), p. 22.

[60]Ibid., p. 26.

[61]Ibid., pp. 35ff.

opposition; physical illness and death[62]; racial barriers[63]; geographic boundaries[64]; and the bondage of socially constructed systems. The last chapter of the book leaves the door wide open for the generations of believers who will break down the barriers to the gospel in their own time and place.

This dissertation has explained how Bennett broke through human barriers to change the system. It has presented a sociological analysis to explain how Bennett exerted his influence and reinstitutionalized the changed system. But one part of the story is still missing. The power Bennett had to exert change in the social systems came from the same power that converted Saul, that gave Peter courage to preach before the San Hedrin, that tore the veil of the temple in half at the crucifixion, and that displayed the Spirit's presence at Pentecost. The power of God gave Bennett the inner strength he needed to be an agent of denominational change.

All of these years of influential ministry began with a young, poor, country boy making a simple prayer commitment to God, "Thy will be done, no matter where it leads, no matter what it costs." Now, sixty years later, the perspective of time has granted the reader the ability

---

[62]Acts 9.

[63]Acts 10-11.

[64]Acts 13-20.

to see the moving of the Spirit of God in the life of Bennett to break down the barriers of religious bigotry, economic and social poverty, social and sexual inequality, racism, and injustice. Bennett certainly has not broken those barriers down for all time; but he leaves behind a vast assortment of students, friends, and colleagues who are following his example to carry the unhindered good news of Christ into their own communities. His life has made a difference. God granted his prayer.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books

Ackoff, R. L., and F. E. Emery. "Human Organizations as Systems." In Systems Thinking, vol. 1. ed. F. E. Emery. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972.

Allen, Jere. "Faith, Social Ministry, and Linkage between the Two in the Southern Baptist Convention." In Faith and Social Ministry: An Interfaith Dialogue. Eds. James D. Davidson, C. Lincoln Johnson, and Alan C. Mock. Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1990.

Allen, Jere, and George Bullard. Shaping a Future for the Church in the Changing Community. Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1981.

Andrea, Fred W., comp. Shooting the Rapids: Effective Ministry in a Changing World. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1990.

Babbie, Earl. The Practice of Social Research. 5th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1989.

Bennett, G. Willis. "Christian Ethics and Community Action." In Issues in Christian Ethics. Ed. Paul D. Simmons. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1980.

_____. Confronting a Crisis: A Depth Study of Southern Baptist Churches in Metropolitan Transitional Areas. Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1967.

_____. "Education." In Toward a Creative Urban Strategy. Comp. George A. Torney. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1970.

_____. Guidelines for Effective Urban Church Ministry: Based on a Case Study of Allen Temple Baptist Church. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983.

_____. The Effects of Long Holiday Weekends on Church Life and Work. Nashville, TN: Interagency Council, SBC, 1969.

_____. The Role of the Christian through Church and State in Human Welfare. Washington, D. C.: Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, 1967.

_____ and David T. Britt. A Selected Bibliography: The City, Church, and Ministry. Atlanta: Home Mission Board, SBC, 1982.

_____. "Who's Who Among the Extremists." In Extremism Left and Right. Ed. Elmer S. West, Jr. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972.

Berton, Pierre. The Comfortable Pew. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1965.

Callahan, Daniel J., ed. The Secular City Debate. New York: Macmillan, 1966.

Carroll, Jackson W., Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney. Handbook for Congregational Studies. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986.

Claerbaut, David. Urban Ministry. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983.

Conn, Harvie M. A Clarified Vision for Urban Mission: Dispelling the Urban Stereotypes. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987.

Cox, Harvey. The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective. Toronto: Macmillan, 1965.

_____. Religion in the Secular City: Toward a Postmodern Theology. New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1984.

Driggers, B. Carlisle, comp. Models of Metropolitan Ministry: How Twenty Churches Are Ministering Successfully in Areas of Rapid Change. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979.

Dubose, Francis M. How Churches Grow in an Urban World. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1978.

Encyclopedia of Southern Baptists, vol 1. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1958.

Gaddy, C. Welton. "Preaching and Social Change." In Shooting the Rapids: Effective Ministry in a Changing World. Ed. Fred W. Andrea. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1990.

Gardner, Charles S. The Ethics of Jesus and Social Progress. New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914.

Gilkey, Langdon. How the Church Can Minister to the World without Losing Itself. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

Greenway, Roger S., ed. Discipling the City: Theological Reflections on Urban Mission. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979.

Gustafson, James M. Treasure in Earthen Vessels: The Church as a Human Community. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961.

Harbour, Brian. "Acts." In New International Version: Disciple's Study Bible. Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers.

Hopewell, James F. Congregation: Stories and Structures. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

Howse, W. L., and W. O. Thomason. A Church Organized and Functioning. Nashville: Convention Press, 1963.

Hull, William E. Beyond the Barriers: A Study of Reconciliation for the Contemporary Church. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1981.

Jones, Ezra Earl and Robert L. Wilson. What's Ahead for Old First Church? New York: Harper and Row, 1974.

Katz, Daniel, and Robert L. Kahn. "Organizations and the System Concept." In Classics of Organization Theory. 2d ed. Ed. Jay M. Shafritz and J. Steven Ott, eds. Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1987.

Lauer, Robert H. Perspectives on Social Change. 4th ed. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1991.

Leiffer, Murray H. The Effective City Church. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1961.

Leonard, Bill J. Community in Diversity: A History of Walnut Street Baptist Church, 1815-1990. Louisville, KY: Simons-Neely Publishing Co., 1990.

Lewis, John M. "A Theology of Social Change." In Shooting the Rapids: Effective Ministry in a Changing World. Comp. Fred W. Andrea. Nashville, TN: 1990.

Maciver, R. M. Community: A Sociological Study. 1st ed., 1917. New preface, 1970. London: Frank Cass and Company, Limited, 1970.

McSwain, Larry L., and William C. Treadwell, Jr. Conflict

Ministry in the Church. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1981.

_____. Floyd Street Revitalized. Louisville, KY: Urban Studies Center, 1969.

_____. "The Minister as Proactive Agent of Social Change." In Shooting the Rapids: Effective Ministry in a Changing World. Comp. Fred W. Andrea. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1990.

_____. Old Louisville: A Challenge and an Opportunity. Louisville, KY: Urban Studies Center, University of Louisville, 1969.

Moore, Richard E. Urban Church Breakthrough. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Nachmias, David, and Chava Nachmias. Research Methods in the Social Sciences. 3rd ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. Christ and Culture. New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1951.

1992 Southern Baptist Convention Handbook. Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1992.

Parson, Talcott, and Gerald M. Platt. The American University. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973.

_____, and Neil J. Smelser. Economy and Society. Glencoe, IL: Free Press of Glencoe, 1956.

_____. The Social System. New York: Free Press, 1951.

Pasquariello, Ronald D., Donald W. Shriver, Jr., and Alan Geyer. Redeeming the City: Theology, Politics, and Urban Policy. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1982.

Rogers, Donald B. Urban Church Education. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1989.

Rose, Larry L. and C. Kirk Hadaway. An Urban World: Churches Face the Future. Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1984.

Rose, Larry L., and C. Kirk Hadaway, eds. The Urban Challenge: Reaching America's Cities with the Gospel. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1982.

Rosenberg, Ellen M. The Southern Baptists: A Subculture in Transition. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989.

Sample, Tex. U. S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990.

Schaller, Lyle. Planning for Protestantism in Urban America. New York: Abingdon Press, 1965.

Shippey, Frederick A. Protestantism in Suburban Life. New York: Abingdon Press, 1964.

Smelser, Neil J., ed. Handbook of Sociology. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1988.

_____. Social Change in the Industrial Revolution: An Application of Theory to the British Cotton Industry. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959.

_____. Sociology: An Introduction. New York: John Wiley, 1973.

_____, and Erik Erikson. Themes of Love and Work in Adulthood. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980.

Smith, Anthony D. The Concept of Social Change: A Critique of the Functionalist Theory of Social Change. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973.

Stagg, Frank. The Book of Acts. Nashville: Broadman Press, 1955.

Treadwell, William C., and Larry L. McSwain. Church Organizations Alive! Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987.

Torney, George A., comp. Toward Creative Urban Strategy. Waco, TX: Word Books, 1970.

van der Berghe, Pierre L. "Dialectic and Functionalism: Toward a Synthesis." In System, Change, and Conflict. Eds. N. J. Demerath, III, and Richard A. Peterson. New York: Free Press, 1967.

Van Houten, Mark E. God's Inner-City Address: Crossing the Boundaries. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing Company, 1988.

Weber, Max. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1958.

Who's Who in Religion, 1991-92. 4th ed. Willmette, IL: Reed Reference Publishing Company.

Wildman, John Hazard. Rebirth and the Road to Vigor: The Renewal of Old Louisville. Louisville, KY: Urban Renewal and the Community Development Agency of Louisville, n. d.

Wilmore, Gayrand S. The Secular Relevance of the Church. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.

Winter, Gibson. The New Creation as Metropolis. New York: Macmillan, 1963.

_____. The Suburban Captivity of the Churches: An Analysis of Protestant Responsibility in the Expanding Metropolis. Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1961.

Younger, George D. The Church and Urban Renewal. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1965.

PERIODICALS

Allen, Jere. "Guiding Churches through Change." Review and Expositor, 80 (Fall 1983), 571-582.

"Bennett Delivers Inaugural Address." The Tie, 32 (January 1967), 3.

"Bennett Picked for Theology Position." The Tie, 52 (November 1983), 4.

"Bennett Receives CLC's Distinguished Service Award." The Tie, 49 (October 1980), 8.

"Bennett To Fill Brookes Chair." The Tie, 39 (April-May 1970), 1.

"Bennett Will Direct Field Education." The Tie, 38 (March 1969), 4.

Bennett, G. Willis, and the Graduate Seminar in Church and Community, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Annotated Bibliography on the Church in the Urban Community." Review and Expositor, 63 (Summer 1966), 313-319.

Bennett, G. Willis. "The Case for Multiuse of Church Facilities." Church Administration, 13 (September 1971), 12-14.

_____. "The Changing Face of the Contemporary City." Review and Expositor, 80 (Fall 1983), 489-499.

_____. "The Church in Secular Society." Review and Expositor, 64 (Summer 1967), 297-308.

_____. "The City Church in the Area of Transition." Home Missions, 37 (January 1966), 6-29.

_____. "The City's Challenge to the Church." Review and Expositor, 63 (Summer 1966), 249-261.

_____. "The City's Crisis of Change, Part I." Home Missions, 37 (November 1966), 10-11.

_____. "The City's Crisis of Change, Part II: Are Baptists Lagging in New Ministries?" Home Missions, 37 (December 1966), 11-30.

_____. "The City's Crisis of Change, Part III: Applying Old Truths to New Questions." Home Missions, 38 (January 1967), 26-30.

_____. "The Deacon and Community Agencies." The Deacon, 1 (January-March 1971), 37-39.

_____. "Educating Churches for Urban Environment." Home Missions, 41 (June 1970), 6-11.

_____. "Education for Christian Ministry." Quarterly Review, 48 (January-March 1987), 43.

_____. "Forced Termination of Staff Ministers." Search, 21 (Fall 1990), 44-49.

_____. "A History of the Urban Training Cooperative of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1971-91." Unpublished monograph. January 1992.

_____. "How May Baptist Churches Prepare for the Community Problem of Unemployment?" The Baptist Training Union Magazine, 38 (December 1963), 12.

_____. "Ministry as Profession and Calling." Review and Expositor, 70 (Winter 1973), 5-15.

_____. "New Life for Declining Churches in Declining Communities." Home Missions, 36 (October 1965), 28-30.

_____. "New Patterns of Church Ministry." Review and Expositor, 66 (Spring 1969), 155-165.

_____. "Obstacles to Religious Living." Sermons of the Week, 2 (October 28, 1960), 20-25.

_____. "Play and Its Meaning for Preaching." Review and Expositor, 47 (April 1950), 165-172.

_____. "The Social Environment and Its Influence on Counseling Procedure in the Rural Church." Pastoral Psychology, 10 (September 1959), 31-36.

_____. "A Theology of Leisure." Home Missions, 38 (November 1967), 16-20.

_____. "An Urban Church Model: Allen Temple Baptist Church." Urban Missions, 5 (September 1987), 30-37.

_____. "Urbanization and the Church." The Baptist Program, no vol. no. (February 1970) 14-15.

_____. "What is Your Community Saying to Your Church . . . or Are You Listening?" Church Administration, 10 (January 1968), 14-18.

_____. "The Witness of the Serving Church." Review and Expositor, 66 Supplement (May 1969), 101-114.

Brewer, Earl D. C. Review of Confronting a Crisis, by G. Willis Bennett. Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring 1968), 223-224.

Bullard, George W., Jr. "Using Consultation in Strategy Planning." Review and Expositor. 80 (Fall, 1983), 561-570.

DuBose, Francis M. Review of Guidelines for Effective Urban Church Ministry, by G. Willis Bennett. Review and Expositor, 82 (Spring 1985), 273-274.

Durham, Jaqueline. "The Model Urban Training Center for Christian Mission." Home Missions, 61 (June 1970), 12-15.

Faulkner, Brooks R. "Identifying Church and Community Needs." Church Administration, 10 (January 1968), 18-19.

"Great Churches in America." The Christian Century, 67 (August 2, 1950), 913-919.

Knight, Walker L. "Training for an Urban Ministry." Home Missions, 41 (June 1970), 4-5.

McSwain, Larry L. "Community Forms and Urban Church Profiles." Review and Expositor, 80 (Fall 1983), 501-514.

"Profile: G. Willis Bennett." The Tie, 49 (March 1980), 7.

Theses, Dissertations and Seminar Projects Supervised by G. W. Bennett or Committees of Instruction on which He Served

Andrea, Frederick Wilhelm. "A Critical Examination of the Sociology of Religion of J. Milton Yinger: Implications for Selected Problems in Church and Community." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1982.

Bennett, George Willis. "A Comparative Study of the Cardinal Virtues in Philosophical Ethics and the Personal Virtues in the Teachings of Jesus and Paul." Th.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1954.

_____ and the Graduate Students in Seminar CC 661. "A Social Survey of Downtown Louisville and Implications for the Church." Seminar Papers, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1971.

_____ and the Graduate Students in Seminar Christian Ethics 596. "Social Welfare Ministries of Organized Religious Groups in Louisville, KY." Seminar Papers, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1965.

Britt, David Tillman. "Local Factors in Urban American Church Growth: Two Protestant Denominations in Jefferson County, Kentucky." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985.

Bullard, George Woodrow, Jr. "An Analysis of Change in Selected Southern Baptist Church in Metropolitan Transitional Areas, 1965-1975." Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1977.

Clingenpeel, Michael. "Southern Baptist Churches Which Disband: Implications for Theology and Terminal

Ministries." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979.

Cochran, Robert Dennis. "A Study of the Development of New Congregations among Southern Baptist in Selected Metropolitan Areas since 1970." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985.

Dever, John Preston. "Toward an Ethical Understanding of Leisure in a Technological Society." Th.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968.

Freeman, Edward Barnes, Jr. "Church and Community Interaction in an Urban Area of Deterioriation and Social Change: A Case Study of the Twenty-Third and Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky." Ph.D. dissertation, 1973.

Furr, James Harold. "A Critical Analysis of Selected Urban Church and Community Classifications." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987.

Godwin, Roy E. "Contemporary Social Change and the Protestant Pastor: Implications for Southern Baptists." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972.

_____. "The Role of the Church in Racial Integration in Urban Areas of Transition." Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1967.

Jackson, Robert Harold. "Toward an Ethic for the Ecological Crisis." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972.

Letsinger, Norman Herbert. "The Women's Liberation Movement: Implications for Southern Baptists." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1973.

McSwain, Larry Lee. "Toward a Planned Religious Life in a New Community." S.T.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1970.

Newell, James Altus. "A Strategy for Seminary-Related Continuing Education for Pastors." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974.

North, James Martin. "The Ethics of the Guaranteed Annual

Income." Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968.

Perry, Harvey William. "The Interrelatedness of Church and Community in Selected Rural Areas of Kentucky." Th.M. thesis, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968.

Pyburn, Richard Earl. "Selected Seminary Student Pastors and Their Churches: A Transactional Analysis." S.T.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972.

Sapp, William David. "Factors in the Involvement of Southern Baptist Pastors in Governmental Decision-Making." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1975.

Saul, Doyle Glenn. "Southern Baptist Mission Action as a Fulfillment of the Servanthood of the Church." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1969.

Truluck, Rembert Scarborough. "Small Group Evangelism in the Local Church." S.T.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1968.

Tucker, Grayson L. "A Group Process for the Professional Development of Seminarians." S.T.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1971.

Turner, Paul Winston. "A Study of Attitudes of Selected Graduates of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Toward Ministry: 1950-70." S.T.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972.

Weedman, William Lee. "An Analogy of Socio-Economic Factors Affecting Church Ministries with Reference to Selected Minority Groups in Metropolitan Areas." Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary 1968.

Winterowd, Kay Beldon. "The Role of Para-Ecclesial Agencies in the Renewal of Church and Society: An Analytical Study of the Mission Training Programs of Three Models." Ed.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1972.

Doctor of Ministry Projects Supervised by Bennett

Bentley, Kenneth Pershing. "A Critique of the Long-Range Planning Process as Experienced by the Boyles Baptist Church." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974.

Bullard, George. "The Development, Use, and Evaluation of Process for Consultation with Churches in Transition in Metropolitan Settings." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1980.

Carver, Gary Linn. "The Enlistment and Training of a Lay Staff for the East Huntsville Baptist Church." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1978.

Choate, Dennis Ray. "Logotherapy and the Religious Development of a Child: Implications for the Parents of Madison Avenue Baptist Church." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1978.

Cornwell, Cecil Bryan. "Training Group Care Workers to Implement a New Philosophy of Treatment at the Georgia Baptist Children's Home, Inc." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1980.

Curtis, John Arthur. "The Selection and Implementation of Ministry Priorities in the First Baptist Church of Newton, Illinois." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979.

Deans, William Anderson, III. "An Evaluation and Redesign of the Supervised Ministry Studies Staff Development Program for Campus Supervisors at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979

Ellis, George Harvey. "Evangelism as the Diaconal Ministry at the First Baptist Church of Mt. Healthy." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1983.

Griffith, William Herbert. "The Effects of Couple Communication Training on Marital Perceptions." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981.

Hamm, Larry Michael. "Integrating the Expectations of the

Congregation and Pastor of Speedway Baptist Church." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986.

Harber, Ronald Franklin. "A Program to Lead Church Members to Discover and Use Their Spiritual Gifts in Ministry." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985.

Johnson, Lynwood Fox. "Implementing a Ministry Growth Plan at Maryland Baptist Church, Phoenix, Arizona." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985.

Jones, David Selph, Jr. "Developing a Program of Ministry for the Spiritual Renewal of the First Baptist Church, Mobridge, South Dakota." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1977.

Morrow, David Francis. "A Critical Evaluation of the Bible Study Program of the First Baptist Church of Red Springs, North Carolina." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1975.

Leake, Raymon. "Establishing a Ministry to Persons over 65 Years of Age in Richton, Mississippi." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1978.

Luck, James Russell. "The Determination of Ministry Priorities Through an Analysis of the Franconian Baptist Church and its Community." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984.

Mackey, Billy Fred. "Developing Select Ministries with the Colson Baptist Mission of the First Baptist Church, Whitesburg, Kentucky." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1979.

Mathis, Donny Ray. "The Development of a Program of Preaching to Meet Selected Needs of Members of Southside Baptist Church of Princeton, Kentucky." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976.

Mears, Ted Alvin. "An Evaluation of the Repetition of Short-Term Mission Ministries in the Same Location in Successive Years." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1978.

McManus, Uriah Alonzoe. "A Program to Improve the Devotional Practices of the Membership of Calvary Baptist Church, Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina." D.Min.

project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974.

Nelson, Brian Alden. "An Evaluation of the Koinonia Groups in the First Baptist Church of Morris, Illinois, for the Purpose of Developing a Plan for their Future." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1974.

Oliver, Allen Lee. "Developing a Program to Deepen the Understanding of Religious Liberty by the Hillandale Baptist Church, Adelpho, Maryland." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1976.

Pound, Geoffrey Roger. "Proclaiming Liberty to the Captives in Dunedin Prison, New Zealand." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985.

Sayer, Avery L. "Strengthening Interpersonal Relationships among Urban Multi-Ethnic Groups through a Local Congregation." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981.

Skaggs, Harold Franklin. "A Strategy for the Improvement of the Radio Ministry of the Cadiz Baptist Church." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984.

Walker, Thomas Henderson. "Developing Task-Oriented Group to Perform Selected Ministries at Hillsboro Heights Baptist Church Huntsville, Alabama." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981.

Warford, Charles Aaron. "The Implementation of a Discipleship Program Using Masterlife Training Materials." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984.

Walrath, Douglas Paul. "A Program of Growth Oriented Training in the Irving Park Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois." D.Min. project, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1980.

Miscellaneous Resources Cited in the Dissertation

Bennett's Recorded Campus Addresses, Listed Chronologically

Bennett, G. Willis. "Faculty Address: The Church in Secular Society." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded November 8, 1966.

_____. "Chapel Address." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded September 28, 1967.

_____. "Urban America Challenges the Church." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and Recorded January 31-February 2, 1968.

_____. "The Religious Context of Church Growth." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded February 3-7, 1969.

_____. "Responding to the Pressures of Change: Parts I and II." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded April 26, 1972.

_____. "The Doctor of Ministry: Objectives and Methodology." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded October 9-11, 1972.

_____. "Relationship between Faculty and Field Supervisors." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded, October 9-11, 1972.

_____. "The Wholeness of Our Task." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded October 15-18, 1973.

_____. "Church Ministry: Landscape or Blueprint? Theological Foundations for Christian Ministry; Research as a Means of Ministry; Interdisciplinary Approach to Planning; The Role of the Pastor and the Church in Changing of Society" at a Conference Entitled "Crucial Issues in the Practice of Ministry." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded, 1974.

_____. "Responding to Crises." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded December 6-8, 1977.

_____. "Jesus Calms the Storm." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and WAVE-TV, recorded 1978.

_____. "Chapel Address." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded March 17, 1978.

_____. "Rural Church/Small Community." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded April 21, 1978.

_____. "Current Developments in the Field of Church and Community." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded May 2, 1979.

_____. "Chapel Address." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded August 31, 1979.

_____. "Omnilogue: Adult Learners at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary/Metroversity Television, recorded 1980.

_____. "The Director of Missions as Leader." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded January 19-22, 1981.

_____. "Church and Community" at a Conference Entitled "Theological Potpourri." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded September 29, 1981.

_____. "Urban Church Ministry for Louisville: A Seminar for Methodist Ministers." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded on successive Mondays, October 4-November 1, 1982.

_____. "Chapel Address: Putting God into Your Tomorrow, James 4:13-17." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded August 31, 1983.

_____. "Sociology in the Service of Religion." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded October 7, 1983.

_____. "Chapel Address." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded February 8, 1985.

_____. "Chapel Address, II Peter I: 5-11." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded July 29, 1986.

_____. "Redemptive Relationships in the Practice of Ministry, Chapel Address." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded September 23, 1986.

_____. "Issues in Ministry with Senior Adults." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded February 24, 1987.

_____. "Christian Response to People in Crisis." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded August 28, 1988.

_____. "Comments" at Conference Entitled "Ministry in Situations of Chronic Stress." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded March 13, 1989.

_____. "Caring Ministries and Evangelism" presentation at seminar entitled "Building an Evangelistic Church." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded March 20, 1989.

_____. "Comments from G. Willis Bennett at Anniversary and Homecoming Celebration for 15th Anniversary of Boyce Bible School." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded July 1, 1989.

_____. "What Every Church Needs to Do." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded November 9-11, 1989.

_____. "Theme Interpretation for Conference on Biblical Authority and the Practice of Ministry." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded December 13, 1989.

_____. "Commencement Address for Boyce Bible School." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded May 25, 1990.

_____. "The Nature and Mission of the Church: The Acts of the Apostles January Bible Study." The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded October 17-19, 1990.

_____. "Theme Interpretation for Conference entitled 'Evangelizing the City: Possibilities for the 21st Century.'" The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded October 28, 1990.

_____. "How Does the Association Relate to Churches of Diverse Strength?" The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, delivered and recorded January 17-21, 1991.

Interviews Cited in the Dissertation

Allen, Jere. Telephone interview with the author. March 11, 1993.

Barnette, Henlee. Interview with the author. Louisville, KY. April 2, 1993.

Bennett, Caroline. Interview with the author. Louisville, KY. April 13, 1993.

Bennett, George Willis. Interviews with the author. Louisville, KY. March 11, 23, April 6, June 3, 1993.

Bennett, Russell. Interview with the author. Panama City Beach, FL. May 19, 1993.

Bullard, George. Telephone Interview with the author. April 7, 1993.

Cross, Dale. Interview with the author. Louisville, KY. March 15, 1993.

Dever, John P. Interview with the author. Louisville, KY. April 13, 1993.

Hadaway, Kirk. Telephone interview with the author. April 21, 1993.

Honeycutt, Roy Lee. Interview with the author. Louisville, KY. April 22, 1993.

McSwain, Larry L. Interview with the author. Louisville, KY. April 15, 1993.

Oates, Wayne E. Interview with the author. Louisville, KY. June 3, 1993.

Proctor, Robert. Interview with the author. Louisville, KY. June 3, 1993.

Ratcliff, Don. Telephone interview with the author. April 6, 1993.

Rose, Larry. Telephone Interview with the author. March 12, 1993.

Seminary Archival Materials
Cited in the Dissertation,
Listed Chronologically

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1958-59. Louisville, KY.: SBTS, 1958?

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], October 6, 1958." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], January 14, 1959." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], February 13, 1959." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], February 19, 1959." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting], May 30, 1959." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1961-62. Louisville, KY.: SBTS, 1961?

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1963-64. Louisville, KY.: SBTS, 1963?

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the Joint Faculty Meeting], February 2, 1963." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], January 6, 1964." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], February 7, 1966." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "A Proposed Field Education Program for School of Theology Students, for Presentation at the School of Theology Faculty Meeting, January 31, 1966." Inter-Office correspondence located in the "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], February 7, 1966."

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 7, 1966." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], April 4, 1966." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], September 9, 1968." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], February 3, 1969." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 3, 1969." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 31, 1969." Available in the Seminary Vault,

Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], January 5, 1970." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], March 30, 1970." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], May 25, 1970." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, The Catalog of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1970-71. Louisville, KY.: SBTS, 1970?

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], August 27, 1970." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], December 7, 1970." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], April 5, 1971." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY. "[Minutes of the School of Theology Faculty Meeting], April 21, 1971." Available in the Seminary Vault, Norton Hall, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY.

ABSTRACT

GEORGE WILLIS BENNETT:
DENOMINATIONAL CHANGE AGENT

James Bryan Cobban, Sr., Ph.D.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1993
Chairperson: Dr. Larry L. McSwain

The purpose of the dissertation is to evaluate the effectiveness of George Willis Bennett as an agent of change in the Southern Baptist Convention. Bennett joined the faculty of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1959, after two successful rural pastorates. As a professor of ethics and church and community, Bennett taught students to understand and appreciate their church's community, whether in a rural or an urban location.

Bennett also became an administrator at the seminary, eventually retiring in 1991 as Seminary Provost. At the seminary, he oversaw the creation of the Church and Community department, the revision of the Field Education component of the curriculum, the creation of the Doctor of Ministry degree, and several other major changes.

Bennett was called upon to provide a major research project for the Southern Baptist Convention in 1965. That study resulted in a book that chronicled the decline of SBC churches in urban areas in the mid-60's. The book contained recommendations for changes in the way that Southern Baptist churches design strategies for urban evangelism. The long

term effect of the study is that a number of SBC agencies changed or designed their work to fit Bennett's recommendations.

The first chapter is an introduction to the study that relates my interest in the study and the methodology of the research. The second chapter describes the content of a functional analysis before turning to the work of Talcott Parsons and Neil Smelser as the primary theorists.

The third and fourth chapters tell the story of Bennett's life, including his childhood, his influence on the denomination, and his contribution to the seminary. The third chapter relates most to his work in the denomination and the fourth his work at the seminary.

The final chapter analyzes the Bennett's professional life in terms of a functional analysis. The chapter includes future implications of the study and a theological reflection based on the book of Acts.

VITA

James Bryan Cobban, Sr.

PERSONAL

Born:	September 4, 1959; Altus, Oklahoma
Parents:	James H. and Donna J. Cobban, Springfield, Missouri
Children:	James Bryan Cobban, Jr., born January 5, 1988

EDUCATIONAL

Public Schools, Joplin and Springfield, Missouri, 1965-1977
B. A., Baylor University, Waco, Texas, 1981
M. Div., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1984
Th. M., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988

MINISTERIAL

Summer Missions, Springfield, Missouri, 1978, 1979, 1980
Contract Worker, Missouri Baptist Convention, 1981
Minister of Single Young Adults, Beverly Hills Baptist Church, Waco, Texas, 1978-81
Minister of Senior Adults, Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 1982-84
Minister of Single and Senior Adults, Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 1984-89
Minister of Education, Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 1989-93
Director of Family Ministries, Walnut Street Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky, 1993-

ACADEMIC

Garrett Fellow, Church and Community Department, for Gary Farley (January, 1991) and G. Willis Bennett (1991-93)
Campus Supervisor, Supervised Ministerial Experience, 1992-93